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PREFACE

After India attained Independence in 1947, both the Central and State Governments have been making constant efforts for the all-round development of the population as a whole. At the same time, special attention is being given to the development of backward sections of the community such as the Scheduled Tribes (or Adivasis) and the Scheduled Castes.

According to the census of 1951, the Scheduled Tribes number over 1.9 crores, forming about 5.4 per cent of the total population of some 35.69 crores. These tribal people are generally found living in hills and dense forests in certain regions which are not easily accessible, following their own peculiar customs and traditions. To safeguard the interests of these people and to ensure their welfare and the autonomy of their social life, special provisions have been made in the Constitution of India.

This publication has been planned in order to provide a comprehensive picture of the different aspects of the life of Adivasis. Contributions have been secured from leading anthropologists in the country on subjects which will be interesting and informative for the general reader, while the basic approach to tribal people and their problems is discussed by the Prime Minister, Shri Jawaharlal Nehru, in *The Tribal Folk*.

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THE TRIBAL FOLK*

Jawaharlal Nehru

Mr. Chairman and friends, this audience is more or less a select one since it consists largely of experts. I am not an expert and I am afraid I shall not be able to contribute much if we were to sit down and discuss your problems.

I suppose you have invited me here because I happen to occupy the office of Prime Minister, but I think I have another, and possibly greater, claim to participate in this Conference. The claim is that I have always—long before I became Prime Minister—felt very strongly attracted to the tribal people of this country. This feeling was not the curiosity an idle observer has for strange customs; nor was it the attraction of the charitably disposed who want to do good to other people. I was attracted to them simply because I felt happy and at home with them. I liked them without any desire to do them good or to have good done to me. To do good to others is, I think, a very laudable desire but it often leads to great excesses which do not result in good to either the doer or the recipient.

In the tribal people I have found many qualities which I miss in the people of the plains, cities and other parts of India. It was these very qualities that attracted me.

The tribal people of India are a virile people who naturally went astray sometimes. They quarrelled and occasionally cut off each other's heads. These were deplorable occurrences and should have been checked. Even so, it struck me that some of their practices were perhaps less evil than those that prevail in our cities. It is often better to cut off a hand or a head than to crush and trample on a heart. Perhaps I also felt happy with these simple folk, because the nomad in me found congenial soil in their company. I approached them in a spirit of comradeship and not like someone aloof who

*Speech delivered at the opening session of the Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Areas Conference held in New Delhi in June, 1952.

had come to look at them, examine them, weigh them, measure them and report about them or to try and make them conform to another way of life.

I am alarmed when I see—not only in this country but in other great countries too—how anxious people are to shape others according to their own image or likeness, and to impose on them their particular way of living. We are welcome to our way of living but why impose it on others? This applies equally to national and international fields. In fact, there would be more peace in the world if people were to desist from imposing their way of living on other people and countries.

I am not at all sure which is a better way of living. In some respects I am quite certain theirs is better. Therefore, it is grossly presumptuous on our part to approach them with an air of superiority or to tell them what to do or not to do. There is no point in trying to make them a second rate copy of ourselves.

Now, who are these tribal folk? A way of describing them is that they are the people of the frontiers or those who live away from the interior of this country. Just as the hills breed a somewhat different type of people from those who inhabit the plains, so also the frontier breeds a different type of people from those who live away from the frontier. My own predilection is for the mountains rather than for the plains, for the hill folk rather than the plains people. So also I prefer the frontier, not only in a physical sense but because the idea of living near a frontier appeals to me intellectually. I feel that it would prevent me from becoming complacent, and complacency is a very grave danger, especially in a great country like India, where the nearest frontier may be a thousand miles away.

We should have a receptive attitude to the tribal people. There is a great deal we can learn from them, particularly in the frontier areas, and having learnt, we must try to help and co-operate. They are an extremely disciplined people, often a great deal more democratic than most others in India. Even though they have no constitution, they are able to function democratically and carry out the decisions made by

elders or representatives. Above all, they are a people who sing and dance and try to enjoy life; not people who sit in stock exchanges, shout at each other and think themselves civilised.

I would prefer being a nomad in the hills to being a member of the stock exchange, where one is made to sit and listen to noises that are ugly to a degree. Is that the civilisation we want the tribal people to have? I hope not. I am quite sure that the tribal folk, with their civilisation of song and dance, will last until long after stock exchanges have ceased to exist.

It is a very great pity that we in the cities have drifted so far away from the aesthetic side of life. We still have a good many folk-songs and dances when we go to the villages, because modern civilisation has more or less left them untouched. The progress of modern civilisation in India involves both good things and bad. One of the things we have lost is the spirit of song and dance and the capacity for enjoyment and this is what the tribal people so abundantly have. We seem to pay too much attention to the cinema: it is undoubtedly an excellent medium for many good things, but unfortunately it has not proved to be particularly inspiring. We must imbibe something of the spirit of the tribal folk instead of damping it with our long faces and black gowns.

For half a century or more, we have struggled for freedom and ultimately achieved it. That struggle, apart from anything else, was a great liberating force. It raised us above ourselves, it improved us and hid for the moment some of our weaknesses. We must remember that this experience of hundreds of millions of Indian people was not shared by the tribal folk. Our struggle for freedom did influence the tribes in Central India to some extent but the frontier areas of Assam, for instance, remained almost unaffected by it. This was partly due to the inadequacy of the means of communication available to us in the old days. Of course, there were other reasons too.

One of the reasons was that the city people were a little afraid to leave their familiar haunts and go into the mountains. The Christian missionaries went to various tribal

areas and some of them spent practically all their lives there. I do not find many instances of people from the plains going to the tribal areas to settle down. Apart from our own lack of initiative, we were not allowed to go there by the British authorities then in power. That is why our freedom movement reached these people only in the shape of occasional rumours. Sometimes they reacted rightly and sometimes wrongly, but that is beside the point.

The essence of our struggle for freedom was the unleashing of a liberating force in India. This force did not even affect the frontier people in one of the most important tribal areas. The result is that while we have had several decades in which to prepare ourselves psychologically for basic changes, the tribal people have had no such opportunity. On the contrary, they were prepared the other way round through the efforts of the British officials and sometimes the missionaries.

The missionaries did very good work there and I am all praise for them but, politically speaking, they did not particularly like the change in India. In fact, just when a new political awareness dawned on India, there was a movement in North-Eastern India to encourage the people of the North-East to form separate and independent States. Many foreigners resident in the area supported this movement. I do not understand how it could be considered practical or feasible from any point of view. My point is that the people of the North-East frontier had been conditioned differently during the past generation and even in more recent years. The fault lay partly with us and partly with circumstances. These factors have an important bearing on any genuine understanding of the tribal folk.

They are our own people and our work does not end with the opening of so many schools and so many dispensaries and hospitals. Of course, we want schools and hospitals and dispensaries and roads and all that, but to stop there is rather a dead way of looking at things. What we ought to do is to develop a sense of oneness with these people, a sense of unity and understanding. That involves a psychological approach.

You may talk day after day about development programmes in regard to schools and other matters but you will

fail completely if you do not touch the real core of the problem. The need, today, is to understand these people, make them understand us and thus create a bond of affection and understanding. After the achievement of independence, the basic problem of India, taken as a whole, is one of integration and consolidation. Political integration is now complete but that is not enough. We must bring about changes much more basic and intimate than mere political integration. That will take time, because it is not merely a matter of law. All we can do is to nurture it and create conditions where it finds congenial soil. So, the greatest problem of India today is not so much political as psychological integration and consolidation. India must build up for herself a unity which will do away with provincialism, communalism, and the various other "isms" which disrupt and separate.

As I said, we must approach the tribal people with affection and friendliness and come to them as a liberating force. We must let them feel that we come to give and not to take something away from them. That is the kind of psychological integration India needs. If, on the other hand, they feel you have come to impose yourselves upon them or that we go to them in order to try and change their methods of living, to take away their land and to encourage our businessmen to exploit them, then the fault is ours, for it only means that our approach to the tribal people is wholly wrong. The less we hear of this type of integration and consolidation of the tribal areas, the better it will be.

We ought to be careful about appointing officers anywhere, but we must be doubly so when we appoint them in tribal areas. An officer in the tribal areas should not merely be a man who has passed an examination or gained experience of routine work. He must be a man with enthusiasm, whose mind, and even more so whose heart understands the problem it is his duty to deal with. He must not go there just to sit in an office for a few hours a day and for the rest curse his fate at being sent to an out of the way place. That type of man is completely useless. It is far better to send a totally uneducated man who has passed no examination, so long as he goes to these people with friendship and affection and lives as one of them. Such a man will produce better results than

the brilliant intellectual who has no human understanding of the problem. The man who goes there as an officer must be prepared to share his life with the tribal folk. He must be prepared to enter their huts, talk to them, eat and smoke with them, live their lives and not consider himself superior or apart. Then only can he gain confidence and respect, and thus be in a position to advise them.

The language problem is almost always exceedingly important from the psychological point of view. The best of solutions can come to nought if misunderstood or misinterpreted by the party concerned. It is absolutely clear to me that the Government must encourage the tribal languages. It is not enough simply to allow them to prevail. They must be given all possible support and the conditions, in which they can flourish, must be safeguarded. We must go out of our way to achieve this.

In the Soviet Republic we have the example of a country that has adopted such a policy with success. Lenin and other leaders in his time were exceedingly wise in this respect. Regardless of their ultimate objective, they wanted to win the goodwill of the people, and they won it largely by their policy of encouraging their languages, by going out of their way to help hundreds of dialects, by preparing dictionaries and vocabularies and sometimes even by evolving new scripts where there were none. They wanted their people to feel that they were free to live their own lives and they succeeded in producing that impression.

In the matter of languages there must be no compulsion whatever. I have no doubt at all that the West Bengal Government must have built special schools in places like Darjeeling and Kalimpong for the Tibetan-speaking people. If the tribal people have a script we must, of course, use it. But normally they do not have a script and the only script they have thus far learnt, to some extent, is the Roman script. It is a good script no doubt; and because many people have learnt it, I would not discourage it.

But if we are to evolve a script—here I do not speak with any assurance but am merely saying something that has occurred to me—it might be better, for the future, if we were

to use the Devanagari script. It is a relatively easy script, apart from the fact that it can put the tribal folk more in touch with the rest of India than any other script. In areas where a majority of the people know the Roman script, I would not suddenly force them to abandon it because I do not want them to feel compelled in any way.

I find that so far we have approached the tribal people in one of two ways. One might be called the anthropological approach in which we treat them as museum specimens to be observed and written about. To treat them as specimens for anthropological examination and analysis—except in the sense that everybody is more or less an anthropological specimen—is to insult them. We do not think of them as living human beings with whom it is possible to work and play. The other approach is one of ignoring the fact that they are something different requiring special treatment and of attempting forcibly to absorb them into the normal pattern of social life. The way of forcible assimilation or of assimilation through the operation of normal factors would be equally wrong.

In fact, I have no doubt that, if normal factors were allowed to operate, unscrupulous people from outside would take possession of tribal lands. They would take possession of the forests and interfere with the life of the tribal people. We must give them a measure of protection in their areas so that no outsider can take possession of their lands or forests or interfere with them in any way except with their consent and goodwill. The first priority in tribal areas, as well as elsewhere in the country, must be given to roads and communications. Without that, nothing we may do will be effective. Obviously, there is need for schools, for health relief, for cottage industries and so on. One must always remember, however, that we do not mean to interfere with their way of life but want to help them live it.

DO WE REALLY WANT TO KEEP THEM IN A ZOO?

Verrier Elwin

One of the curious criticisms passed almost automatically in India on anthropologists is that they want to keep the tribesmen in zoos or museums for their own purposes. This suggestion was first, as far as I know, made in the Legislative Assembly in February 1936 in a debate on the Excluded Areas, when a number of speakers attacked anthropologists as wishing to keep the primitive people of India "uncivilised" and "in a state of barbarism" in order to add "to their blessed stock of scientific knowledge." And although India has now recognised the importance of anthropology for any intelligent and planned advance of tribal peoples, there are still many who repeat the infantile complaint: indeed if one was to give a word-reaction test to almost any politician of a certain colour, his response to "anthropologist" would certainly be "zoo".

Now it is true that there are, and always have been, people who consider that primitive folk are better than we are, and are therefore better off as they are. They would like to segregate them from the contaminating influences of civilisation and would protect them not only economically, but culturally, from outside exploitation.

But this attitude has nothing to do with anthropology, and in actual fact few anthropologists hold it. Today, indeed, the fashion in anthropology is to study developing rather than static societies, and the blessed stock of scientific knowledge is thus more likely to be augmented when the doors of the zoo are thrown open than when they are kept closed.

It is interesting to find that the correct attitude to tribal peoples was keenly debated hundreds of years ago, long before scientific anthropology was ever thought of, and that precisely the same arguments were used as are used today. Is Man better in a state of Nature or of Art? Is the untutored

"savage" happier, more moral, in a word "better" than the sophisticated and urban product of the modern world?

Boswell and Johnson discussed this question several times. Boswell, who after all had personally visited Rousseau, was all for the Noble Savage. Johnson was not. "Don't cant in defence of savages", he exclaimed, and when Boswell attempted to argue for the superior happiness of the savage life, he retorted, "Sir, there can be nothing more false. The savages have no bodily advantages beyond those of civilised men. They have not better health; and as to care or mental uneasiness, they are not above it, but below it, like bears." He thought that the (American) Indians had no affection; had he been born one, he must have died early, for his eyes would not have served him to get food. One evening he poured scorn on those who preferred living among savages. "Now what a wretch that must be, who is content with such conversation as can be had among savages!"

But long before this, the discovery of the New World, with its exciting populations of primitive people, had set all Europe thinking about the problem. Opinion, then as now, was divided. Some were in favour of leaving them alone. Of these Montaigne is an example. He considered that the inhabitants of the "unpolluted and harmless world" of the hills and forests were naturally virtuous as compared to civilised man. In his essay, *Of Cannibals,* he declares that the Indians are only wild in the sense that wild flowers are wild, but that in them are "the true and most profitable virtues and natural properties most lively and vigorous." Civilisation has "bastardised" these virtues, "applying them to the pleasures of our corrupted taste." He regrets that Plato did not live to see the discovery of primitive America, for he might then have given a better picture of the Golden Age.

Many other writers took the same view. Spencer has a gentle noble tribesman in *The Faerie Queene;* Drayton enthused over the reports from America; Beaumont and Fletcher write of "Sunburnt Indians, that know no other wealth but Peace and Pleasure". And many deplored the corrupting influence of the first colonists and planters; Fuller spoke of Christian savages who went to convert heathen savages.

Other reporters, however, took a less optimistic view. We find the Indians spoken of as "human beasts"; they are "perfidious, inhuman, all savage"; Sandys says that the Indians, like the Cyclops, are "unsociable amongst themselves and inhuman to strangers". Nowhere is the divergence between the two views set out more plainly than by Shakespeare in *The Tempest*.

In this play, Caliban (whose name has been derived from Carib, an aboriginal of the New World, and cannibal) stands for the Indian, and Prospero for the colonist or planter, and the conflict between them reflects the current controversies about the character and status of primitive man.

Caliban, who is of a "vile race", the product of witchcraft, "a freckled whelp hag-born", scarcely human in appearance, "as disproportioned in his manners as in his shape", is the aboriginal owner of the island on which Prospero and his daughter have been marooned. His own description of the process by which he loses his rights makes rather uncomfortable reading:

> This island's mine, by Sycorax my mother,
> Which thou tak'st from me. When thou cam'st first,
> Thou strok'st me, and made much of me; would'st give me
> Water with berries in it; and teach me how
> To name the bigger light and how the less,
> That burn by day and night: and then I lov'd thee,
> And show'd thee all the qualities o' th' isle,
> The fresh springs, brine-pits, barren place and fertile:
> Curs'd be I that did so !

Yet in taking over tribal territory, Prospero does not neglect some measures of social uplift and education, and in this his daughter Miranda is a keen and efficient assistant. Even though they reduce Caliban to a mere slave and woodcutter, she "pities" him, takes pains to make him speak, teaches him each hour one thing or another.

This is not altogether successful. As Mr Frank Kermode has recently pointed out, "Caliban's education was not only useless, but harmful. He can only abuse the gift of speech; and by cultivating him Prospero brings forth in him 'the briers and darnell of appetites'—lust for Miranda, discontent

at his inferior position, ambition, intemperance of all kinds, including a disposition to enslave himself to the bottle of Stephano". Such is, of course, the very common result, even today, of a too rapid acculturation.

Yet Shakespeare, so much more universal than Johnson, sees also the other side. Caliban is not wholly without virtue; there is a suggestion that he has been wronged; above all, he has an ear for music and, like tribal people elsewhere, he has poetry at command, and for a moment speaks words of sublime beauty. And the representatives of civilisation who follow Prospero to the island are in their way no better than Caliban himself. Stephano and Trinculo are drunken buffoons; Antonio is a malicious degenerate; the life of Alonso is deeply stained with guilt. It is under the inspiration of these representatives of the modern world that Caliban takes to drink and turns treacherously upon his master. It is surely not without significance that Shakespeare shows us this primitive man becoming a "footlicker" of a drunker butler.

And it is interesting, in view of methods that have since been attempted to win the confidence of tribal people, to find Stephano claiming to be descended from the moon in order to impress Caliban.

Shakespeare's view, then, seems to be that, although primitive man is not much good, contact with civilisation can only make him worse.

Throughout the seventeenth century, however, this realistic attitude was obscured by a widespread sentiment in favour of the innocent shepherd, the happy husbandman, the Hortulan Saint. So rich indeed is the poetic material of this period that a Norwegian scholar, Dr. Rostvig, has required nearly five hundred pages to exploit it in her recent work, *The Happy Man.* The pastoral tradition of European poetry derived its ideas of the Golden Age from the classical poets Horace, Virgil and Hesiod, and even from such Latin prose writers as Cato, Varro and Columella who wrote so enthusiastically in praise of agriculture and farming. The life admired by these authors was not altogether 'primitive'; it had its elements of comfort and decorum; but it was simple, obscure and self-contained, in sharp contrast to the degraded,

mercenary and unhealthy life of the towns. A score of English poets extolled this kind of existence in some such terms as those used by Cowley in a translation of one of the Horatian Odes:

> Happy the Man whom bounteous Gods allow
> With his own hands Paternal grounds to plough!
> Like the first Golden Mortals happy he
> From Business and the cares of Money free!
> From all the cheats of law he lives secure,
> Nor does th' affronts of Palaces endure.

Under the stress of the Civil War and the prevailing Puritanism of the Roundhead movement, 'Nature' and the country life became more and more idealised; it was here alone that man could commune with God; it was here that the purest virtues could be practised. The most famous of the writers who infused the classical ideal of the Golden Age with a mystical enthusiasm was the Polish poet Sarbiewski, to whom the Biblical motif of the *hortus concluses* or Earthly Paradise was a living reality. He seems to have influenced the Welsh Vaughan and the English Marvell, especially in the latter's garden-poems.

Along with this belief in the innocence and beauty of the uncorrupt life of Nature went the theological doctrine that Adam and Eve, the first of all the tribals, were created perfect —Aristotle is but the ruins of an Adam. Before Darwin, the course of history was commonly supposed to have been steadily downhill, and civilisation was a steady corruption of what had originally been perfect. This led logically to Rousseau's back-to-nature movement in the following century.

One result of this was the emergence of an attitude to life which has been called primitivism, and which has been studied in great detail by a number of American scholars, Lovejoy, Boas and Margaret Fitzgerald. This has been divided into cultural primitivism, which regards modern 'uncivilised' societies as being, in all the fundamental values of life, better than civilised populations, and chronological primitivism, which holds that the earlier, pre-civilised periods of human life were the happiest and best. Adam and other tribals are better and happier, partly because they are earlier

in time, partly because they lived beyond the Inner Line that circled Eden.

The seventeenth century primitivism led to an increased interest in primitive peoples, and Mr R. W. Frantz, in an important study of the travellers of the period, has pointed out that "certain voyagers discovered, or thought they discovered, traces of a universal and fixed morality and the prevalence of three cardinal virtues—piety, benevolence and self-control—which seemed to be fundamental to all peoples, whether semi-civilised or totally savage." The idealist was easily able to persuade himself that "the good and noble life was to be lived not in towns and cities, but in the solitude of the American forests or the South Sea Isles."

An interesting result of this was that, unlike later Imperialists who justified themselves as having to bear the white man's burden of native superstition and ignorance, the first colonists tried to encourage immigration to the tribal areas by painting their inhabitants in glowing colours. Thus when Walter Hammond wrote his pamphlets on Madagascar, he called the first of them (published in 1640) "A Paradox, proving that the Inhabitants of the Isle called Madagascar, or St. Laurence, are the happiest People in the World." Who then would not jump at the chance of going to live among them?

Primitives were further divided into 'hard' and soft'. In antiquity, says A. O. Lovejoy in his *Documentary History of Primitivism*, "the men of the Golden Age under the Saturnian dispensation were soft primitives, and the imaginary Hyperboreans were usually soft savages; on the other hand, the noble savages *par excellence*, the Scythians, and the Getae, and later on the Germans were rude, hardy fellows to whom 'Nature' was no gentle or indulgent mother; they were extolled for the fewness of their desires and their consequent indifference to the luxuries and even the comforts of civilised life." In more recent times, the soft, sensuous and elegant primitives of Tahiti or Bali have excited the admiration of artists and poets, while the virile hardy primitives of, let us say, the North-East frontier of India have won the respect of soldiers.

Even at this comparatively early period, there is evident, in the attraction felt for the 'soft' primitives, a delight in the erotic freedom, the lack of inhibitions and the sexual innocence supposed to have been enjoyed by man before he was corrupted by modern society and its rules. It is significant that the expression 'the Noble Savage' did not originate, as is so often thought, with Rousseau, but with the astonishing Mrs Aphra Behn, that ardent missionary of free love, whose poems, plays and stories constantly compare the advantages of the simple rural life with the frustrations of sophistication.

In that blest Golden Age, when Man was young,
When the whole Race was vigorous and strong;
When Nature did her wondrous dictates give,
And taught the Noble Savage how to live. . .
When every sense to innocent delight
Th' agreeing elements unforc'd invite.

The hero of Mrs Behn's *Oroonoko,* though a 'native' of Surinam, is a great gentleman who found happiness by refusing to be 'civilised'. Mrs Behn was no anthropologist and she assumed, of course quite wrongly, that primitive man had no need for external government (which only existed to curb the greed and ambition of educated persons) and enjoyed all the raptures of free love. Or as Thomson was to put it later: 'The romp-loving miss is hauled about in gallantry robust.'

Other poets of this century who exalted the 'savage' were Thomas Heyrick, whose poem, *The Submarine Voyage,* describes the people of the South Sea Islands as 'happy in ignorance', and 'strangers to care'; Waller in his *Battle of the Summer Islands* draws an idyllic picture of the inhabitants of plantain-shaded atolls of sensuous beauty and ease. And the great Dryden himself, is a famous couplet, spoke of the happy days

"Ere the base laws of servitude began,
When wild in woods the noble savage ran."

The last thing that the poets and travellers of this period wanted was to 'improve' or 'uplift' these aboriginals; what they desired was to go and share their lot. There was no question of keeping them in a museum; they wanted to enjoy their earthly paradise.

In the following century, the voyages of Captain Cook and other explorers provided factual support for these sentiments. According to Captain Cook, the "savages" of Australia may indeed appear to be the most wretched people upon earth, but in reality "they are far more happy than we Europeans, being wholly unacquainted not only with the superfluous but with the necessary conveniences so much sought after in Europe; they are happy in not knowing the use of them." And visits to Tahiti and the Friendly Islands confirmed this picture of the Noble Savage.

This fitted very conveniently into the more advanced thinking of certain philosophers and revolutionaries, especially in France. The doctrine of original sin, it was supposed, was discredited by what Bougainville found in the Pacific. The child is happier and better than the man. The existing state of modern society appears decadent and corrupt before the peaceful and truthful civilisation of the islanders; it must therefore be overthrown. Mr. Christopher Lloyd epitomises the views of Diderot, whose article on Savages was so subversive that it was omitted from the Paris edition of the French Encyclopedia. In a remarkable dialogue, which he pretended was a supplement to Bougainville's Tahiti journal, Diderot "accused his countrymen of acting the part of the serpent in this new Eden. He makes an old islander beg him to go away and leave the natives in peace. Otherwise such men as he will return with a cross in one hand and a gun in the other to enslave their bodies and poison their minds. For civilisation, according to Diderot, was indeed a kind of poison injected into the mind of natural man, thereby creating a sort of war within ourselves which lasts all our lives. Natural man is at odds with artificial man, and the best description of the unhappy product was, in the words of his friend Buffon, *Homo Duplex*".

But now came the new European Imperialism and with it a great expansion of the missionary movement. Colonists and missionaries alike had to justify their existence by showing how necessary they were to the heathen world. From now onwards primitive man was painted in the darkest terms.

Even in Java, as Bishop Heber suggested, though every prospect pleased, man was vile, blind, benighted.

> Can we whose souls are lighted
> With wisdom from on high,
> Can we to men benighted
> The lamp of life deny?

We have come a long way from Cook and Hawkeworth, from Boswell, Rousseau and Diderot. To them primitive man was not fallen, he was *better* than modern man; we had much to learn from him; and the best thing we could do for him was to leave him alone. To the missionary and the colonist, however, primitive man seemed to exemplify the ancient doctrine of original sin, and it was above all necessary that he should be saved.

Even in recent times there have been men, such as Gauguin, R. L. Stevenson, Pierre Loti, and Hermann Melville, who have insisted that the 'aboriginal' is no mere Caliban, but in many ways has the advantage of us. A typical, though now unfashionable, view is expressed in the words used by John Collier of the English peasants of the northern hills of Hampshire: "These are the best people I have ever met in my life, far and away the best, better than any I know among artists or writers, or any rich people, or any of the proletariat. You would laugh if I were to describe the stringent measures I would take, had I the power, to preserve them from the wanton fools who would degrade them, or the insolent, presumptuous fools who endeavour to improve them."

It is surely evident that, whether the idea of the tribesman's superiority is right or wrong, the suggestion that he should be left alone in his peace and happiness has nothing to do with the anthropologists.

In modern times in India there have been three different attitudes to the problem. The former British Government tended on the whole to leave the tribesmen alone, partly because the task of administration, especially in the wild border areas, was difficult and unrewarding; partly from a desire to quarantine the tribes from possible political infection; and partly, I think, because certain officers sincerely held the Rousseau-Diderot doctrine that the people were better and happier as they were.

In sharp distinction to this is a policy of 'assimilation' which has become very popular since Independence. Both Christian missionaries and Hindu social reformers have, in their different ways, desired to see the primitives civilised, their 'inferior' social customs and ideas eliminated and their identity assimilated either into the Christian Church or into the general framework of Hindu society.

The Christian missionaries have had striking successes in some tribal areas, though they have failed in others. Especially in Assam, they have converted a high percentage of such tribes as the Lushais, Khasis and the so-called Naga groups. The Christian Khasis have preserved their matriarchal social structure, and the Lushais and Nagas have retained certain aspects of their life (in particular their very beautiful hand-weaving), but in the main they have lost most of what is distinctively tribal and have adopted a semi-western culture.

Similarly, the ambitious programmes of education, reform and change now being initiated by most of the State Governments, while bringing many economic and social benefits to the people, are likely to bring to an end the older values, good and bad alike, of tribal life. For though a sincere desire for tribal welfare is now everywhere apparent, this is not matched by an equal interest in or respect for tribal culture. You cannot make an omelette without breaking eggs, and the continued existence of the tribes as tribes is regarded as of less importance than the march of civilisation. This policy has already created many examples of the *Homo Duplex*.

Between these two extremes of doing too little and doing too much there is a third policy, with which the name of the Prime Minister, Mr. Nehru, is associated. This may be summarised as one which approaches tribal life and culture with respect and the tribesmen with an affection which eliminates any possibility of superiority. It would bring the best things of modern life to the tribes, but in such a way that these will not destroy the traditional way of life, but will activate and develop all that is good in it. In a number of remarkable speeches, Mr. Nehru has spoken of the strong attraction which he has for the tribesmen and has described how he approached

them "in a spirit of comradeship and not like someone aloof who had come to look at them, examine them, weigh them, measure them and report about them or to try and make them conform to another way of life." He has given serious warnings of the dangers of the 'assimilation' approach. Pointing out the disastrous effect of "the so-called European civilisation" on tribal peoples in other parts of the world, "putting to an end their arts and crafts and their simple ways of living", he declared that "now, to some extent, there is danger of the so-called Indian civilisation having this disastrous effect, if we do not check and apply it in the proper way."

"I am alarmed", he said, "when I see—not only in this country, but in other great countries, too—how anxious people are to shape others according to their own image or likeness, and to impose on them their particular way of living." He declared that he was not sure which, the modern or the tribal, was the better way of living. "In some respects I am quite certain theirs is better." "They possess a variety of culture and are in many ways certainly not backward." "There is no point in trying to make of them a second-rate copy of ourselves." He emphasised the importance of encouraging the tribal languages, so that they would not only prevail but flourish. He insisted that a measure of protection must be given so that "no outsider can take possession of tribal lands or forests or interfere with them in any way except with their consent and goodwill." He hoped that the high sense of discipline, the power to enjoy life, the love of dance and song would endure among the tribesmen. Schemes for welfare, education, communications, medical relief were no doubt essential; "one must always remember, however, that we do not mean to interfere with their way of life, but want to help them to live it." "The Government of India," he said again, "is determined to help the tribal people to grow according to their own genius and tradition."

The same policy has been admirably stated by Mr. Jairamdas Daulatram, formerly Governor of Assam. "Each section of our large population," he has said, "contributes to the making of the nation, in the same manner as each flower helps to make a garden. Every flower has the right to grow according to its own laws of growth; has the right to enrich

and develop its own colour and form and to spread its own fragrance to make up the cumulative beauty and splendour of the garden. I would not like to change my roses into lilies nor my lilies into roses. Nor do I want to sacrifice my lovely orchids or rhododendrons of the hills."

We do not want to preserve the tribesmen as museum specimens, but equally we do not want to turn them into clowns in a circus. We do not want to stop the clock of progress, but we do want to see that it keeps the right time. We may not believe in the myth of the Noble Savage, but we do not want to create a class of Ignoble Serfs.

Now this attitude poses a serious problem to the administration. The assimilation policy which holds, broadly speaking, that there is not very much to be said for tribal life; that if it disappears it will not matter greatly; that the 'backward' must be brought forward and that the lowly are to be 'uplifted', is simple and straightforward; it is logical, and it brings many benefits—at a price. So did the British policy of leaving well alone—though at a different price.

But the new attitude, the Nehru attitude, has complex implications. For, tribal culture is the most delicate thing in the world. Of it we may say what Oscar Wilde said of innocence: it is a delicate, exotic fruit—touch it, and the bloom is gone. Tribal social organisation in India has to some extent managed to survive, though many acculturated tribal communities have suffered a tragic moral decline. The tolerant influences of Hinduism have enriched tribal religion with a loftier ethic and vitalised it with a nobler conception of deity, but at the same time they have often brought the more dubious accretions of new gods to be placated and new taboos to be observed.

The contact of civilisation has generally had an adverse effect on tribal art and culture. His exquisite taste for design and colour disappears when a tribesman enters a shop in the bazar. The splendid tribal dress and ornamentation is rapidly abandoned in favour of a parody of western clothing. The tribal languages have shown an alarming lack of vitality when confronted by a system of education in another tongue. In some areas the dance has died out altogether; in others it

has become woefully debased. The tribal craftsman does not seem able to maintain his standards before external competition.

The task set by Mr Nehru, therefore, is no easy one, for it involves several ideals that have rarely been found compatible. The first is to preserve, strengthen and develop all that is best in tribal society, culture, art and language. The second is to protect tribal economic rights. The third is to unite and integrate the tribes in a true heart-unity with India as a whole, so that they may play a full part in her life. And the last is to develop welfare and educational facilities so that every tribesman may have an equal opportunity with his fellow-citizens of the open country and the plains.

This original, indeed unique, conception, at once scientific and humane, steers a middle path between the two older ways of approach and, if properly applied, should have the advantages of both and avoid their dangers. It is difficult, but it is surely right. It is supported both by the findings of anthropological science and the warnings of history. It is a charter of religious, social, economic and cultural rights. It is the embodiment of the spirit of reverence. It is a gospel of friendliness and equality.

Here, for almost the first time in history, the conflicting attitudes of Boswell and Johnson, of Rousseau and Bishop Heber are reconciled. The new knowledge that anthropology has brought has enabled us to see tribal people without sentiment, and equally without prejudice. Isolation in the modern world is impossible; it would not be desirable even if it was possible. The old controversy about zoos and museums has long been dead. We do not want to preserve tribal culture in its colour and beauty to please the scientists or to attract the tourists. But we see now that the tribesmen will be of the greatest service to India if they are able to bring their own peculiar treasures into the common life, not by becoming second-rate copies of ourselves. Their moral virtues, their self-reliance, their courage, their artistic gifts, their cheerfulness are things we need. They also need the comradeship, the technical knowledge, the wider world view of the plains. The great problem is how to develop the synthesis without destroying the rare and precious values of tribal life.

THE TRIBAL PROBLEM

Nabendu Datta-Majumder

According to the 1951 census of India, which covered Sikkim but not the State of Jammu and Kashmir and Part B Tribal areas of Assam, the total population of India is 35,68,79,394, out of which the Scheduled Tribes account for 1,91,11,498. Article 366(25) of the Constitution of India has defined "Scheduled Tribes" as "such tribes or tribal communities or parts of or groups within such tribes or tribal communities as are deemed under Article 342 to be Scheduled Tribes for the purpose of this Constitution." By the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950, issued by the President in exercise of the powers conferred by Clause (1) of Article 342 of the Constitution of India, 212 tribes in 14 States have been declared to be Scheduled Tribes. These tribes constitute 5.36 per cent of the total population of the country.

The tribal population of India may be divided into three principal territorial zones, namely, the North-Eastern Zone, the Central Zone and the Southern Zone. The North-Eastern Zone consists of the Sub-Himalayan region and the hill and mountain ranges of North-Eastern India east of the Tista valley and the Jamuna-Padma portion of the river Brahmaputra. This zone is inhabited by tribes like the Gurung, Limbu, Lepcha, Aka, Dafla, Abor-Miri, Mishmi, Singpho, Mikir, Rabha, Kachari, Garo, Khasi, Naga, Kuki-Lushai, Chakma and others.

The Central Zone which is separated from the North-eastern Zone by the gap between the Garo Hills and Rajmahal Hills consists of the plateaus and mountainous belts between the Indo-Gangetic Basin to the north and roughly the Krishna river to the south. The main tribes inhabiting this zone are the Santal, Munda, Oraon, Ho, Bhumji, Kharia, Birhor, Bhuiyan, Juang, Kandh, Savara, Gond, Baiga, Bhil, Koli, etc.

The Southern Zone may be said to consist of that part of peninsular India which falls south of the river Krishna. This

zone is inhabited by tribes like the Chenchu, Kota, Kurumba, Badaga, Toda, Kadar, Malayan, Muthuvan, Urạli, Kanikkar, etc.

In addition to the above zones, mention may be made of a small and isolated fourth zone consisting of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands in the Bay of Bengal. The main tribes inhabiting this zone are the Jarawa, Onge, North Sentinelese and the Nicobarese. Numerically these are small tribes, though important anthropologically.

* * * * * *

The tribes of India speak languages which are different not only from those of non-tribal India but also from one another. The tribal languages may be classified into three main groups, the Dravidian, Austric and Sino-Tibetan. The tribal languages of the Dravidian group include Gondi (spoken by the Gond), Kui (spoken by the Kundh), Kurukh (spoken by the Oraon), Malto (spoken by the Malpaharia) and others. Under tribal languages of the Austric group are included Santali, Mundari, Ho, Kharia, Bhumij, Korku, Savara, Gadaba, Khasi and Nicobarese. Tribal languages of the Sino-Tibetan group may be sub-divided into two branches—Tibeto-Burman and Siamese-Chinese. But the majority of the languages belong to the Tibeto-Burman branch which include Murmi, Magari, Lepcha, Bodo, Abor, Miri, Dafla, Mikir, Naga, Lushai, etc. Khamti comes under the Siamese-Chinese branch.*

The tribes of India not only speak different languages, but also have distinctive cultures of their own. These cultures in the sense of socio-economico-religious patterns of living vary from tribe to tribe and region to region. The tribal peoples live in different economic stages ranging from food-gathering and hunting through shifting cultivation to settled plough cultivation. The Birhor, Korua and Hill Maria depend on food-gathering and hunting for their livelihood. The Baiga, Pauri (hill) Bhuiyan, Juang and Kutia Kandh are shifting cultivators. The Munda, Santal and Oraon depend primarily on permanent plough cultivation for their living. The Naga have developed a system of terraced cultivation with elaborate means of irrigation by aqueducts.

Cf. Grierson, G. A.—*Linguistic Survey of India;* also *Languages of the Adivasis* by Suniti Kumar Chatterji.

In social organisation also there is a wide range of variation from tribe to tribe. The matriarchal Garo and Khasi co-exist with the patriarchal Munda, Santal and other tribes in India. Some tribes like the Onge go about practically naked, whereas tribes like the Bhuiyan and the Gond have regular dresses. The majority of the tribes live in extreme poverty and illiteracy. Literary education is a very recent innovation in tribal culture. The writer came across a number of Juang, Birhor and Pauri Bhuiyan men, who referred to their tribes as ignorant and wild denizens of the forests.

That there is a vast socio-cultural gulf between the tribal groups on the one hand and the plains peoples of Assam, Bengal, Bombay and other States of India is common knowledge. The problem that has been exercising the minds of thinking persons in India, especially after the attainment of independence, is what should be the place of the tribal peoples in the framework of the Indian nation and how they should be developed and brought to a level with the rest of the people socially, economically, culturally and politically. About the future place of the tribes in Indian society, three schools of thought have already emerged.

"Seeing the pitiable socio-economic conditions of the tribal peoples resulting from their past uncontrolled contact with the agents of alien cultures, one school desires to put a stop to all contact and preserve the aboriginal tribes in reservations in their pristine purity, completely isolated from the rest of India. This policy of isolation runs counter to the facts of the Indian situation and wants to turn back the wheels of history. The process of acculturation has gone on for thousands of years influencing the cultures of tribes living in the most inaccessible corners of India. Not even the leaf-wearing Juang of Keonjhar or the Kutia Kandh of Balliguda Agency have been free from this all-pervading process which has moulded tribal as well as non-tribal cultures. Indeed, it would now be idle to think in terms of reservation and isolation. No iron curtain can be put up between the tribal and the non-tribal cultures.

"There is a second school which goes to the other extreme and thinks in terms of complete assimilation of the aboriginal

tribes to the neighbouring non-tribal cultures. This policy of complete assimilation also does not conform to the trends of Indian history. In spite of the millennia of culture-contact and inter-cultural borrowing, Indian society has not become a homogeneous whole. Though in the course of historical development Indian society has acquired certain cultural characteristics which are truly national, there is no denying the fact that it is composed of distinct heterogeneous cultures like those of the Santal, Gond, Kandh, Oriya, Telugu, Kashmiri, etc. In this socio-historical context it would be futile to think in terms of complete assimilation of cultures having millions of carriers.

"The third school of thought believes in the integration of aboriginal tribes* in Indian society. This integration does not presuppose assimilation, and is compatible with heterogeneity of cultures. The Santal, Gond and Kandh may maintain their identity and distinctive culture and yet be an integral part of the Indian nation. The Bengali, Marathi, Kashmiri, Oriya and Telugu cultures have not lost their identity through the vicissitudes of history and still form integral parts of the Indian society and nation today. There is no reason why we should doubt the possibility of integration (as opposed to either isolation or assimilation) in the case of the aboriginal tribes of India. During the first general election based on universal adult suffrage, it was noticed that the aboriginal tribes all over Orissa, instead of boycotting the elections, mustered strong at the polling booths and exercised their franchise as citizens of free India. The percentage of polling was highest in the tribal areas.

"In a vast country like India having within its borders many heterogeneous cultural groups, it is only through integration that the emergence of a free democratic nationalism is feasible. The different component groups while maintaining their social distinctiveness and traditional background may acquire certain common denominators of national culture valued by all and thereby develop a sense of national unity. Such an integrated national political structure without

*The word "tribes" has been used here in place of the word "cultures" appearing in the original article.

absolute social homogeneity is not a new concept in world history. In Switzerland we find an example of distinct cultural groups forming one nation and living together peacefully. The U.S.A. has built up a strong nation out of diverse ethnic and cultural groups. The U.S.S.R. has welded numerous human groups of diverse physical and cultural origins ranging from the primitive tribes of Siberia to the sophisticated and industrialised White Russians into a well-integrated nation."*

* * * * * *

The necessity of having education and better economic conditions is now being felt by the tribes themselves. On being asked how the tribal peoples can be developed, one Munda of village Sitagarha in the district of Hazaribagh, who has read up to the M.E. standard, replied that (i) sufficient cultivable land should be given to each family, and (ii) facilities should be provided for higher professional and technical education in medicine, engineering, law, etc. In answer to the same question, a graduate Munda teacher in a High School at Gola in the district of Hazaribagh stressed the need for higher education and good positions in Government service for the tribal peoples. A number of Oraon men at the village of Karge in the Ranchi district wanted the local M.P. school to be converted into a U.P. school, and demanded more cultivable land and adequate irrigation facilities. An illiterate Munda of village Anigara in the district of Ranchi desired that the Government should provide more grain *golas* for advancing seed grains at a low rate of interest, loans for purchasing bullocks, and hospitals. He also emphasised that at least one boy in every Munda family should be given the opportunity of having higher education, so that he could substantially supplement the meagre earnings of other members of the family engaged in cultivation.

As has been mentioned before, there is a wide range of variation in economy and other aspects of culture among the tribes of India. Though what has been stated in the preceding paragraph is true of tribes like the Munda, Oraon and Santal, there are other tribes like the Juang and Birhor, who

*Cf. Datta-Majumder, Nabendu—"Aboriginal Tribes of Orissa" *The March of India*—November-December 1953, p. 56.

are still living in such a primitive socio-cultural state that they neither appreciate the value of literary education nor think that their present economic condition can be improved in any way. All that they want is to be left alone and allowed to pursue their traditional way of life. But even then it would be correct to say that the vast majority of the tribal population in India today are anxious to acquire literary education and better their economic condition.

Thus the interests of the nation as a whole and those of the tribes coincide. The all-round development of the Indian nation is bound to be retarded if a large section of its population is isolated or lags behind. The national plans of economic development of the country cannot also be formulated and executed without taking into consideration the natural resources available in the tribal areas. Nor can the tribal peoples expect to live in isolation from the rest of India. Even when communications in the tribal areas were extremely undeveloped, various kinds of contact between the tribes and the plains people existed, as a result of which reciprocal borrowings of cultural elements have taken place to a considerable extent. With the rapid development of communications today, the question of maintaining isolation does not arise. Besides, the objective of economic and educational development of the tribes (now demanded by the tribes themselves) cannot be achieved in isolation from the rest of the country.

The only practical solution of the tribal problem in the present situation would, therefore, lie in the integration of the tribal peoples in the national democratic set-up of India. The Indian nation would thus be a vast mosaic in which the numerous ethnic and cultural groups would constitute the component elements of diverse colours and patterns. But this national mosaic would not be of a fixed and rigid pattern like a mosaic floor. There will always be scope for adjustment and re-adjustment, integration and re-integration.

In order to bring about the integration of the tribal peoples in the national democratic set-up of India, it is essential that the economic and educational standards of the tribal groups should be brought on a par with the rest of the people. But to achieve this objective the different tribal cultures will have

to be scientifically studied. Otherwise, the attempted measures for economic and educational advancement of a tribe may be quite unrelated to its cultural context, and, therefore, doomed to failure. For example, the food-gathering and nomadic Birhor cannot be settled to permanent plough cultivation all of a sudden. A programme designed to organise the Birhor in co-operative colonies on the basis of the crafts prevailing in their existing culture is more likely to succeed. It has been noticed in the district of Ranchi that the Oraon young men prove useful as motor mechanics. The spread of technical education among the Oraon is, consequently, more likely to contribute to their economic advancement.

The adoption of the principle of regional autonomy in compact tribal areas would facilitate the process of integration of the tribal peoples in the Indian national and social structure. While the economic, educational and political development of the tribes in the autonomous regions must be in conformity with that of the rest of the nation, the tribal peoples must be left free to develop other aspects of their cultures in their own way.

It goes without saying that far-reaching changes in the economic, educational and political spheres cannot take place without affecting the other aspects of tribal culture. In fact, the different aspects of culture are so inter-related that changes in some are bound to lead to concomitant changes in other aspects also. But what is important is that the tribes must have the freedom and time not only to adjust themselves to the inevitable cultural changes, but also to direct them, as far as possible, along lines in harmony with their traditional cultures.

The transition of the tribal peoples from their tribal economy to our national economy, from their tribal organisation to our national political organisation, must be planned and piloted with due consideration to the cultural matrix and pattern of the social groups concerned. In other words, the desired integration of the tribal groups in the national democratic structure of India must be brought about without suddenly uprooting them from their traditional cultural moorings and thereby causing them irreparable physical and psychological damage.

INDIAN ABORIGINES AND WHO THEY ARE

B. S. Guha

The term aboriginal is usually applied to the tribal population of India not in any derogatory sense but to indicate their being the earliest among the present inhabitants of this country. According to the latest census, their number exceeds nineteen million. Not all of them are in the same stage of culture or speak the same language or are racially homogeneous. They differ in these respects in a very marked manner.

Speaking very broadly, they may be divided into three groups according to their distribution, namely, the tribes living in the Northern and North-Eastern zone in the mountain valleys and Eastern Frontiers of India. There is a second group which occupies the Central belt of the older hills and plateaus along the dividing line between Peninsular India and the Indo-Gangetic Plains. In addition, there are tribes scattered over the extreme corners of South-Western India, in the hills and the converging lines of the Ghats. These groups are distinguished from one another in language, culture and physical characteristics although within each group there are affinities in these respects to a large extent. The existence of cultural and regional divisions of these tribes, however, is not accidental, but is due to the nature, source and chronological differences in their migrations into this country.

Taking the last of the three groups mentioned above, namely, the tribes of Peninsular India below latitude 16, their concentration is found chiefly in the southernmost part of the Western Ghats stretching from Wynaad to Cape Comorin. From the fact that they occupy these marginal areas and also from records in the oldest Tamil literature of the Sangam period, they appear to be the most ancient inhabitants now living in India, having been pushed by the intrusion of more advanced people into their present habitats, where safety and shelter were found against increasing pressure.

Beginning from the North-East, the Chenchus occupy the arc of the Nallaimallais Hills across the Krishna and into Hyderabad. Along the Western Ghats from the Koraga of South Kanara, the Yuruvas living in the lower slopes of the Coorg Hills, the Irulas, Paniyans and Kurumbas of the Wynaad, and stretching almost to Cape Comorin along the ranges of Cochin and Travancore and sheltered in the isolation of the forests are found the most primitive of Indian aborigines, such as the Kadars, Kanikkars, Malapantarams, with many of their original traits still preserved.

Excepting the Todas, Badagas and Kotas of the Nilgiri Hills, who form a separate and closely knit economic unit, the basis of life of these aborigines centres round hunting and food gathering as they have not yet developed a settled community life, but wander from one place to another in quest of food. With the simple implements in their possession, namely, a digging stick and a bill-hook, they collect edible roots, tubers, honey and fruit of the chase, such as birds and small animals, which constitute their chief means of subsistence. Fire was made by friction or by a drill and until lately their wearing apparel consisted only of an apron made of leaves or a grass skirt.

Their social structure is based on a dual organisation with authority vested in the headmen who settle disputes and perform the rituals of hunt. Matriliny was the line of descent and the Marumakkathyam law determined inheritance. Among some like the Kadars, there is the custom of filing the teeth and tattooing on the body as beauty aids. What was originally their language or languages is not known. They now speak corrupt forms of the Dravidian languages, such as Malayalam, Tamil, Telugu or Kanarese, according to the nature of the territory they occupy and the people with whom they come into contact.

Physically they are of short to medium stature, of deep chocolate-brown in colour, and with broad flat noses and thick lips. The head is long and the body well developed. In the interior of the hills, especially among the Kadars, Irulas and the Pulayans, there is present distinctly frizzly or spirally curved hair similar to what is seen among the

Melanesian tribes but not of the pepper corn type found among the Andamanese tribes. It is interesting to note that in some characters of the blood, such as the Sickle Cell trait, they closely resemble the Melanesian and East African Negro tribes. At the present time they are greatly intermixed and it is only in the extreme interior that the more archaic types are to be found.

The second of the major groups of the aboriginal tribes occupy the mountain belt between the Narbada and the Godavari—the Central barrier that divides the North from Peninsular India and has provided shelter to these primitive tribes from the most ancient times. References of encounter with these people occur in numerous passages in ancient Sanskrit literature, where their chief physical traits are graphically described. These tribes form the largest assemblage of India's aboriginal population numbering several millions, the Santals alone exceeding two and a half millions. The other important tribes belonging to this group, beginning from the Eastern Ghats and Orissa Hills, are the Khond, the Bhumij and the Bhuiya. In the plateaus of Chota Nagpur live the Mundas, the Oraons, the Hos and the Birhors. Further west along the Vindhya ranges live the Kols and the Bhils, the latter extending as far North-West as the Aravalli Hills. The Gonds, who, next to the Santals, form the largest group, occupy what is known as the Gondwana and extend southwards into Hyderabad and the adjoining areas of Kankar and Bastar.

On both sides of the Satpura range and around the Maikal Hills are found similar tribes like the Korku, the Agaria, the Pardhan and the Baiga. In the hills of Bastar live some of the most picturesque of these tribes, namely, the Murias, the Hill Marias of the Abujhmar Hills and the Bison-horn Marias of the Indravati valley. Unlike the southern group they retain their original languages although the Bhils, the Kols, the Gonds and the Oraons have adopted dialects belonging to the Aryan and Dravidian families. The basic language of this group, which is still retained to a very large extent, belongs to the Munda branch of what is known as the Austric family of languages, the name given by P. W. Schmidt, after

his native country Austria, to a large group of languages distributed widely over Eastern Asia and Oceania but which has not been traced south of the Godavari river in India. The 'Austric' is an agglutinative language with extraordinary development of suffixes and prefixes and absence of masculine and feminine genders except among the Khasis, the objects being distinguished according as they are animate or inanimate.

These tribes, generally speaking, are on a higher plane of development than the southern primitives. Instead of following hunting and food gathering they practise shifting cultivation with the hoe and the axe as implements. Excepting in the centre and in the interior of the hills and plateaus they have undergone the largest amount of acculturation from their Hindu neighbours and have borrowed liberally customs and practices from them.

In earlier times they wore only bark cloth and among the more primitive ones like the Juangs of the Keonjhar and Pal Lahara, aprons made of leaves constituted all their garments. They now wear mill-made cotton clothes which they buy from their Hindu neighbours. Weaving was unknown among them but basket-making and wood carving are developed to a very high degree. They live in settled communities in solidly built huts and communal life is comparatively well organised under the village headmen. Among the more advanced of these tribes like the Santals, there is not only a village council, a *Dhiri*, but they have what is called the Hunt Council or the Supreme Council of the whole tribe elected on a purely democratic basis for settling inter-village disputes.

In general, the tribes are patrilineal and the common form of marriage is by capture. The social life of the tribe centres round what are called the Bachelor's Dormitories or *Dhumkarias*. Among the Murias of Bastar, there is an extraordinary development of this institution known as the *Ghotul*, shared by both boys (Cheliks) and girls (Motiaries) where the young and adolescent are taught strict discipline and made to do a great deal of fagging duties for the village. These dormitories are also the centre of folk dancing and music which occupy an important place in the tribal life. Physically

they are of short to medium stature, dark skinned with long head and generally possessing curly but not frizzly hair. Their characteristic feature is, however, the development of the lower forehead associated with sunken nose which is short and very broad. They are morphologically allied to the Australian aborigines among whom these traits are very marked. Physically they are strong, muscular and well built. They generally show a preponderance of the "agglutinogen B" unlike that of the South Indian aboriginals among whom the incidence of "A" is greater.

The third group of tribal people is distributed all over the sub-Himalayan region and mountain valleys on the Eastern Frontiers of India which merge imperceptably with those of Burma in the South-East. Among the tribes occupying the hinterland between Assam and Tibet may be mentioned the Aka, the Dafla, the Miri and the Apatami on the west of the Subansiri river, and the Gallong, the Minyong, the Pasi, Padam and Pangi in the Dihong valley.

The Mishmi tribes live in the high ranges between the Dibang and Lohit rivers. Towards the east are found the Khamtis and Singhpos and beyond them, converging on the south, are the different Naga tribes occupying mountain valleys on both sides of the Patkoi and extending beyond the Indian frontiers into the Hukawang valley of Burma.

The Naga tribes can be classified into five major groups, consisting of the Rangpan and the Konyak in the northern; the Rengma, the Sema and the Angami in the western; the Ao' Lhota, Phom, Chang, Santam and the Yimstsungar in the central; the Kacha and the Kabui in the southern and the Tankgkhul and the Kalyo-Kengu in the eastern sections. South of the Naga Hills, running through Manipur, Tripura and the Chittagong Hill tracts, and merging into the Arakan ranges of Burma, live the Kukis, the Lushais, the Lakhers, the Chins, etc., many of whom are really overflows of tribes from across the frontiers.

In fact along the North-East Frontiers of India, from the Patkoi to the Chin Hills, there is no clear line of ethnic demarcation between Assam and Burma and the tribes are closely allied, both racially and culturally. These tribes speak

Prime Minister garlanding a tribal child

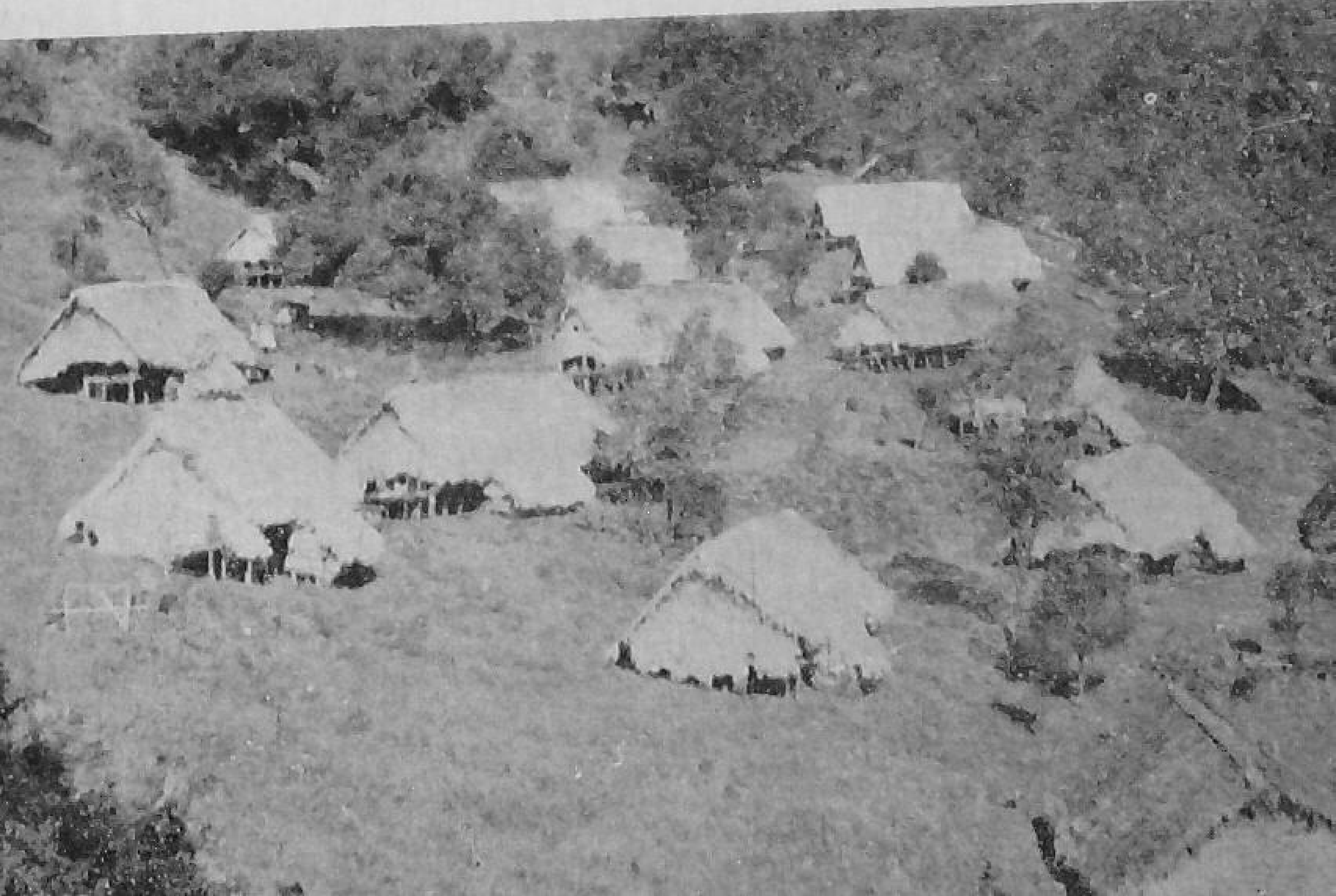
(Extreme right) : *Pango Perme, the repository of Abor mythic lore, and family*

Possessed by spirits

Yerukulas

Bhil woman

Abor village—Lukku



Baiga in dancing costume

languages belonging to the Tibeto-Chinese family which are essentially isolating or mono-syllabic languages, although among the tribal population of Assam the agglutinative principle has developed to some extent. The characteristic feature of these languages is that they do not have the real verb, a shortcoming which prevents their languages from expressing abstract conceptions and higher thought although they are very good media for the expression of concrete ideas. Among a few of these tribes, such as the Khasis, is spoken the Mon-Khmer language, a branch of the Austric family.

In Sikkim and the northern parts of Darjeeling there are a number of rather primitive tribes of whom the Lepchas are best known. Throughout the Himalayan regions many of these tribes like the Lepchas and the Gallongs practise polyandry but the underlying core is monogamic with probably matriliny as the basis of society. This occurs in its most developed form among the Khasis and the Garos among whom women occupy a position not found elsewhere. Some of these tribes still erect stone monuments in honour of their dead.

The North-East Frontier group of tribes also constitute a very large body although their total strength is not so high as that of the Central Indian aboriginals. Judging from the huge stone remains at Dimapur in the Cachar Hills and in various parts of their mountain valleys, it seems probable that most of them had migrated into India at a fairly early time although certainly not so early as the two other groups described before. By and large these people are in considerably higher stages of development and can by no means be called primitive, although their social organisation is simple and they live in constant feuds.

Terrace cultivation has made great strides among the tribes of the Eastern group like those of the Manipur and Naga Hills but in the North-Western zones shifting cultivation is still the prevailing form of agriculture. Among some of them the Bachelor Dormitories, both for men and women, are highly organised, which serve to help not only in the training of the youth in the tribal ways of life but form the

chief centre of preservation of legends, music, dance and artistic expression of the tribe.

Among the majority of the tribal population of North-Eastern India, weaving is highly developed in a narrow loom probably borrowed from Tibet. Cotton, along with rice and millet, is grown on the same *jhum* fields and spinning and weaving are occupations of the womenfolk. The entire organisation of the tribe is, however, based on a war footing and the villages are built on the spur of mountains or vantage points for defensive purposes against constant attacks from enemies.

Among many of these tribes, especially the Nagas, the practice of what is called head-hunting has been a characteristic feature. This is an outcome of their belief in what is known as the Soul Force or the idea that, in addition to the gross matter which constitutes the body, there is a finer substance which gives life and vigour to the individual and which is of a given quantity in a particular locality or community at a particular time. If the quantum of Soul Force decreases, the harvest would be poor and diseases would occur. To guard against such calamities additional Soul Force has to be procured, which can only be done through head-hunting and by keeping the skulls in the house to augment the deceased Soul Force of the particular family or community who happens to be in need of it. It may be mentioned that this practice of head-hunting is not confined to the Naga tribes but extends beyond the Indian borders to Oceania and Melanesia, and its basis is the same ancient and primitive idea which called for human sacrifice as a means of increasing the prosperity of the individual or the community.

Physically the tribes of the North-East Frontier are Mongoloid with light skin, straight hair and flat nose. The eyes give the appearance of being half open with the upper fold of the eyelid covering partially or wholly the inner angle of the eye; this is technically known as the epicanthic fold. The majority of the tribes are of medium stature with long heads, but among some along the Tibetan frontiers the head and the face are round. Among these people the blood group

characters are unlike those of the other aborigines of India with a more equitable distribution of "A", "B" and "O" antingenes. All these tribes, including the women, are muscular with greatly developed calf muscles. They are great mountaineers and can carry considerable loads to high altitudes along difficult trails. They are healthy, hard working and of independent spirit and their life is well balanced, like that of the hill people in general, between strenuous work on the one hand and healthy relaxation on the other, bringing about a happy emotional adjustment.

These three divisions of Indian tribes bring into relief the different stages of their development from a hunting and food gathering state to the life of settled and organised communities with cultural patterns suited to their environments and conditions of life. They also furnish evidence of the age and sources of their movements into India from adjoining countries and the vicissitudes of their history. Taken as a whole they constitute the Adivasis or the oldest inhabitants of this country and there can be no doubt that India's civilisation, as it stands today, has been enriched by the gift of many traits which it received from them. Instead of taking a supercilious attitude, there is a great deal that we can learn from them regarding a healthy and emotionally adjusted life and honesty of thought and action.

THE TRIBES OF SOUTH AND SOUTH-WEST INDIA

A. Aiyappan

In Southern India, in ancient days, we find a Brahmin dynasty—the Satavahanas or Andhras—ruling over the area now inhabited by the Telugu-speaking communities. Though the Andhra kings had Brahminical *gotras* and titles, performed Vedic sacrifices and encouraged the Vedic religion, the Andh or Andhra tribe to which they belonged is referred to as non-Aryan in the earliest mention of them in the *Aitareya Brahmana.* There are early inscriptions which describe the Satavahanas as low-born. Several other South Indian dynasties which followed the Andhras, the Salankayans, the Kadambas, the Chalukyas, etc., are believed to have been Brahmins. Mayura Sarman, the founder of the Kadamba dynasty, who was a Brahmin as his name indicates, took to the profession of arms (very much in the spirit of Drona of the *Mahabharata*) and his descendants styled themselves Varmans as though they were Kshatriyas. The fourth descendant of Mayura Sarman gave his daughters in marriage to the Gupta and other rulers.

Brahmin rulers were the exception rather than the rule in Northern India and most of the codes of the Hindus contain prohibitions against Brahmins assuming ruling powers. The *Skanda Purana* comes forward with the explanation of the phenomenon of Brahminical rulers in the South as a consequence of the sage Parasurama making a gift of these conquered territories to the Brahmins. It seems probable that the advance guard of the Aryans,* south of the Vindhyas, were Brahmins. Of these pioneers, some found it expedient to take up the ruler's functions over people among whom their influence was already well established. Agastya, the hero of the *Puranas*, pressed down the mountain barriers

*The words "Aryan" and "Dravidian" are not used here in any racial sense. Aryan or Dravidian culture, apart from language, is an abstraction made by scholars.

between Northern and Southern India and Aryanised not only the Dravida country but also many countries of South-East Asia and is honoured and saluted in ancient Tamil writings as the first Tamil grammarian, the father of the medical and other sciences, and the conqueror of the seas. At Agastya's command, a Chola king started observing the festival of Indra at his capital on the Kaveri. Another sage, Kapilar, is believed to have taught Tamil to an Aryan king, Brihadatta, through the medium of the songs and music of the hill country, presumably for the reason that they were the simplest samples of Tamil. If we can rely on the historians' conclusions drawn from myths and legends, we might accept as correct the statement that the Aryanisation of the South was a peaceful process in which the Brahmin carried with him great prestige for his cultural equipment.

There exist to this day hundreds of epigraphical records of munificent royal gifts given by South Indian rulers to those Brahmins whom they invited to settle in their territories. These kings seem to have vied with one another in attracting learned Brahmins to their kingdoms to spread Vedic culture and learning.

In visualising the social processes involved in this intermingling of peoples and cultures, history gives us very little assistance; but fortunately we can reconstruct the story with the ethnographer's help. Malabar is a marginal area where social system and processes which disappeared in other regions survived for a much longer period. In the anthropologist's paradise that is Malabar are found a small community of Brahmins, the Nambudiris, not more than 13,000 in number, who have been described by an English author as "the only undisturbed vestiges of Vedic Brahminism". So high has been the prestige of the Nambudiris that they have been the progenitors of the kings and chieftains of the Malabar coast (except Travancore) for generations. Even to this day, the royal ladies of the Cochin and the Zamorin dynasties and the ladies of the families of the chiefs of Malabar and Cochin who practise matriarchy can have only Nambudiri husbands. To gain prestige, the less important Nayar families also followed the example of the rulers and gave their women as

consorts to Brahmins. The efflorescence of Aryanised culture in Malabar owes a great deal to the leadership of the Nambudiris. There was in fact no aspect of life in that area to which these pioneers did not make the most significant contributions. Sankaracharya, the greatest among Indian philosophers, the Indian mathematician who discovered the calculus and the scholar-dancer who developed *Kathakali* to perfection, were all members of this great community. Though Apastamba, reputedly an early Andhra writer on domestic law, prescribes penalties against sex relations between Brahmins and non-Aryans, the prohibition remained a dead letter in the Malabar area, this social situation in a cultural *cul-de-sac* being in all probability a survival of similar processes in other Dravidian areas before the stiffening of caste divisions.

What happened in Malabar was not the imposition of one culture over the other but a slow synthesis during the course of which there was a great deal of give and take. The language of the majority was enriched but not swamped (as in the case of the Bhils), and though the Nambudiris did not adopt the matrilineal family organisation of the local population and the cross-cousin marriage that went with it, they adapted their marriage rules to make it possible for the junior members of all the Brahmin families to have children by non-Brahmin women. Except for the Brahminical sacred thread, the Vedic rituals, and the seclusion and the practice of monandry by the women, there was very little difference between the Brahmins and the rest of the Malabar population.

The social practices of Dravidian Brahmins and other upper castes of South India, and also of Maharashtra, such as cross-cousin marriage, uncle-niece marriage, the use of the *tali* ornament in marriage, etc., seem to be the consequence of a compromise in deference to local practices. In the field of religion, the fusion has been much more pronounced than in the social sphere.

In the linguistic map of India, we notice the Indo-Aryan Maharatti extending like a wedge into the Kanarese and Telugu areas on the west. This is one arm of a pincer, the other being Oriya on the east, where it is pressing on Kandhi

or Kui, the speech of the non-Aryanised Dravidian tribes of Orissa and its neighbourhood. The Gondi dialects of Dravidian speech of the tribes of Madhya Pradesh, once spoken by several millions in those areas, form the highly battered northern bastion of the Dravidian tongue. Kurukh or Orao spoken in Chota Nagpur, Sambalpur and Raighar, and Malto or Maler spoken by the Maler tribe inhabiting the hills near Rajmahal on the Ganga, are the extreme north-eastern survivals of Dravidian.

Gondi, Kurukh, Malto and Kolami (spoken by the Kolam tribe of East Berar and Wardha) are, according to linguists, more closely related structurally to Kanarese and Tamil than to their immediate neighbour Telugu. The significance of this relationship has not been interpreted correctly by those scholars who consider that the Maler and other Dravidian speakers are relatively late-comers to the north from the southern homeland of the Dravidians.

The islands of Dravidian speech such as Brahui in Baluchistan and Malto in Bengal clearly point to the very wide distribution of Dravidian languages in the distant past. It is equally obvious that the expansion of Indo-Aryanism has been responsible for the attrition of Dravidian areas. The northern Dravidian-speaking tribes are carriers of a derelict culture and language on which northern culture and languages were *superimposed*, while the Telugus, Tamils, Kannadigas (Kanarese) and Malayalis live in a cultural environment which is the product of the *synthesis* of northern and local traits.

The tribal people in the southern Dravidian block represent pockets of population least affected by the synthesis and living remote from its effects. There is, however, no complete cultural insulation, for what we see in actual practice is a cultural continuum with the Brahmin at one end and the tribes at the other with the biological and cultural admixture least at the tribal terminus.

Though no comprehensive comparative study of the cultural features of the speakers of Dravidian languages has yet been attempted, cultural traits, other than languages, common to the several far-flung blocks of their population have been

noticed. The Gonds of Central India, for example, have several items of culture which have become matters of ancient history and vague memories for the people of Malabar. The *Kotakal,* a type of funerary monument of the Gonds, survives as a kind of prehistoric monument under the same name in some parts of Malabar, but the meaning of the word and the significance of the monument are all forgotten. The Pardhans, minstrels of the Gonds, known in Gondi as Pana are the same as the Pana of the classical period in the Tamil country but are at present a mere literary memory in the latter region. The *kokra,* a musical rasp of the tribes of the Travancore hills, appears among the musical instruments of the Gonds. The Kotas of the Nilgiris (who are neighbours of the Todas), the Kanikkars of Travancore and other tribes of the South have survivals of the bachelor's dormitories somewhat like the *Ghotuls* or mixed dormitories of North Bastar. The Gondi word *Ghotul* seems to be a variant of the Tamil word *kottil* which means a college for teaching archery. The Muria *motiari* practice of wearing combs in the hair survives among several tribes of the Western Ghats. The military practices of the Khonds as described by the English military men who campaigned in Orissa have several items reminiscent of Tamil warfare, the most interesting one being the cutting of the guardian tree of the village.

Anthropo-Geography of Ancient Tamils

With an insight which reminds us of modern anthropo-geographers, early Tamil writers divide their country into five ecological regions, (a) the forest-girt hills (kurinji), (b) arid, sparsely populated semi-deserts (palai), (c) park land adjoining the forests (mullai), (d) well-watered and cultivated plains (marudam) and (e) coastal tracts (neydal), each of these having its characteristic flora, fauna, peoples, habitations, professions, diet, musical instruments, art forms, etc. Most of the old tribal names are difficult to identify. One of them, the Kuravar, are no longer dwellers of the jungles but are nomads. The chief deity of the forest tribes, Kumaran, is still a very popular god not only of these tribes but also of other Hindus. The cultivation of hill

paddy, millets, etc., and the gathering of honey, tubers, etc., mentioned as the prevailing economic activity of the forest-dwellers are still practised by their descendants. Spirit dances, the cheif religious rite of the hills, are practised today not only by the forest tribes but by several of the plains communities, too.

Of the tribes of the arid tracts, the only identifiable groups are the Kallars and Maravars. Their religious affiliation to the Virgin Goddess is no longer in evidence, but their ancient predatory mode of life as freebooters and fighters continued unchanged until a few decades ago.

The mixed economy of pastoralism and fugitive cultivation of the Kurumba herdsmen, with Vishnu as their chief deity and with bull-racing as their main sport, has survived to the present day with some slight adjustments. Life has grown exceedingly complicated both in the irrigated river valleys and also on the coast, where Indra and Varuna are no longer worshipped in the old fashion.

In their enumeration of the tribes of the five ecological regions, the ancient Tamil grammarians have not, of course, attempted to give an exhaustive list of communities. They have left out the Brahmin, the trading communities and several of the exterior castes. As an example of an early appreciation of the influence of the place of residence on economy, art and religion, their attempt is one of quaint interest.

The major factors that made for social change were the technological advances and Aryanisation which latter also included, in some cases, conquest. Some tribes avoided both these by retiring and seeking refuge in inaccessible regions, and by managing to survive as 'fossils' of an ancient world. Others did not fight shy of the technological changes but resisted conquest and were beaten and driven into inhospitable jungles where, under adverse conditions, they became degenerate and fell to their present level. Those who did not retire into the jungles, but were not determined and courageous enough to resist conquest, were in some cases enslaved and sometimes integrated into the caste system at the lowest level. Some others developed into criminal tribes

when they could no longer maintain their self-respect. Sometimes, junior members of Kshattriya dynasties and Rajput adventurers in search of new land penetrated into the tribal territories and established their political overlordship. Participation by tribesmen, such as the Bhils and Khonds in Rajasthan and Orissa, in feudal ceremonies is indicative of the process of the creation of tribal vassals. Groups that were closely associated with the rulers became administrative castes, *e.g.*, the Nayars in Malabar, the Mudaliars in Tamil Nad and the Reddis in Andhra. Some of the plains castes have a great deal of tribal blood, which is thinly covered by trappings of the so-called 'Sanskritisation'.

In the descriptive account of some of the tribes given below the history of some typical tribes is given to illustrate how they came to be what they are at present.

The Food-Gathering Tribes

The higher altitudes of the Western Ghats and also the Nallaimallais of the East are inhabited by several tribes whose economy does not seem to have changed in any significant manner for the last two thousand years. The most primitive among them are the Aranadan of the Nilambur forest of the Malabar District. Like the jungle Veddahs of Ceylon, the Aranadan gave up their rock shelter habitations only very recently. Of the elements of food production they seem to be ignorant. Trapped game and vermin, and the tubers and yams which men and women dig up are their chief source of food. It is doubtful if they were ever proficient in the use of the ubiquitous bow and arrow.

Some of the food-gathering tribes such as the Paniyar of Wynaad were enslaved and came to have a precarious, symbiotic existence under the peasant communities of the plains. Large annual fairs where agriculturists of Wynaad used to engage their indentured labourers—mostly of the Paniya tribe—were a regular feature of the economy of that area.

Among these tribes some combine food gathering with slash and burn agriculture. The Muthuvan and Kanikkar of Travancore, the Irula, Sholaga, Malaser, Kadar, and other tribes further north are representatives of this progressive

phase. Numerically they are insignificant because theirs is an economy which cannot support large numbers and the harsh environment does not help the development either of the body or the mind.

The Chenchus of the Nallaimallais are one of the largest of the food-gathering tribes. They are the hill section of what was once a numerous aboriginal stock which included also the Yenadis, now one of the backward castes of Andhra and formerly listed among the criminal tribes. The whole block now covered by the Nalgonda and Mahbubnagar districts of Hyderabad and the hilly tracts of Nellore, Guntur, Krishna and Chittoor districts of Andhra was the undisputed territory of the Chenchu-Yenadi tribe before the beginning of the historic age.

When the food-gathering economy of southern India gave place to the agricultural, food-producing economy and tribal hordes were transformed into village settlements, the hill Chenchus resisted change, withdrew themselves from the general stream of technological innovations and clung tenaciously to their digging stick and the chase in the progressively diminishing park-land habitat. The displaced Chenchu became the Yenadi, now widely distributed, with cultural and social contacts at several points with the progressive Andhras.

The Chenchus on the Hyderabad side of the Krishna river are peaceful, inoffensive people living on roots, wild game, fish, etc., and occasionally cultivating small patches of millet. But the Chenchus in the Andhra area, who had their rights in the forests severely curtailed by the forest regulations introduced about 1881, developed criminality to a high degree and became a menace to travellers, pilgrims and to the villagers in their neighbourhood. The Chenchus, however, are without any tradition of criminality; it was only that they reacted in a spirited way to adverse economic changes which other tribes endured stoically. After several punitive actions against them, the Government of Madras recognised the need for alleviating the sad situation of the Chenchus and made several concessions for them. In spite of the steps that have been taken to improve their situation, the Chenchus are still

badly off and very backward. Their only hope lies in taking to agriculture for which they have not yet demonstrated any real taste. Efforts at settling them in forest colonies have not been successful either in the Andhra or the Hyderabad areas.

Tribes of the Nilgiris

The Badagas, Kotas, and Todas are the chief tribal groups of the Nilgiris. They speak Kanarese or dialects of that language. (The Irulas and Kurumbas who are also found in this area are extensions of tribes of the same name in Coimbatore, Malabar and Mysore). The Badagas are excellent agriculturists who came to the Nilgiris after the Todas and are so advanced economically that they are no longer regarded as a tribe. The traditionally recognised Toda overlordship of the soil of the Nilgiris and its tribes is now a mere legend. The elaborate funeral cars of the Badagas seem to be survivals of ancient Indian practices in Buddhist India which have been described by Chinese travellers; they continue to be practised to the present day in Hindu Bali.

The Todas are a picturesque, proud and aristocratic people, the traditional lords of the Nilgiris. The Toda men with flowing hair and beards, their mantles covering their bodies from neck to feet, always impress visitors by their dignified bearing and robustness. Standing near the barrel-shaped huts of a Toda village on the slopes of one of the picturesque hills of the Nilgiris and watching the men and women and the herds of buffaloes, I felt, during my visit to the Todas, as though I were in an ancient world of pastoral nomads! The Todas have been declining in population, partly on account of disease and sterility and partly on account of female infanticide. Now they number only about six hundred. Though insignificant in numbers, the Todas have attracted more anthropological notice than any other tribe in India, or for that matter in the whole of Asia, with the result that no text-book of anthropology fails to have some reference to the sociology of the Todas. Of particular interest are the sacred dairies, the dairy priests and the series of rituals centering round the sacred buffaloes, the sex and marriage regulations of Toda society, such as ceremonial

defloration of nubile girls (now given up), fraternal polyandry, lover relationships with the consent of the husbands, the relationships between the two moieties of the Todas, the paternity ceremonies, etc. The Todas are vegetarians who eat meat only ritually, after a sacrifice, in the same manner as the Vedic Brahmins. In their rituals they use prayer formulae in some of which H.H. Prince Peter of Greece has discovered names of gods and goddesses bearing similarity not only in name but also in function to Sumerian deities.

The Todas have not been quick to adapt themselves to their changing environment of predatory competition and exploitation by newcomers to the Nilgiris. Their rights have been steadily encroached upon and their economic and mental condition has become pitiable. The Servants of India Society and the Government of Madras are making some attempts to help the Todas on the road to progress by educating Toda children and by giving them medical and financial assistance.

The Kotas, neighbours of the Todas in the Nilgiris, are the artisan tribe *par excellence* of this tribal block. They are herdsmen, blacksmiths, carpenters, and potters all rolled into one and have also the additional duty of acting as the professional musicians for the other tribesmen. The tribe is not polyandrous in the strict sense of the term, but brothers have free access to one another's wives. Among the fraternal group, sexual jealousy is said to be remarkably slight. This temperamental peculiarity has been the result of several cultural and social influences, particularly the need for constant and close co-operation between the brothers in most of their economic enterprises which has developed among them the concept of equivalence of brothers. "If a man has no brothers, he has no strength of arm", runs a Kota proverb.

Tribes of Wynaad

The Wynaad taluk is geographically a part of the Nilgiris Plateau. The eastern half of Wynaad, contiguous with the Nilgiris and Coorg, is inhabited by the Kanarese-speaking tribes and the western half by Malayalam-speaking tribes. When the Nilgiri-Wynaad Plateau was being opened up by European planters, they found the country in the possession of a few landlords, chiefly Malayalees. The whole of the

Wynaad area, until its cession to the East India Company by Tippu Sultan, was part of the dominion of the Raja of Kottayam. The actual cultivators were the tribes, such as the Kurichiya, the Mulla, the Kurumbar and the Chetti. During the chaotic days of early British occupation, tribal peasants lost their holdings to planters and their agents, getting little or no compensation. There are cases in which tribesmen who owned acres of jungle land had their properties confiscated just because they were not in a position to meet petty demands made by the revenue officials. With the creation of big pepper, cardamom and coffee estates, there was an influx of labourers from the plains into Wynaad. Petty merchants, money-lenders and labour recruiting agents also came in and, with this influx of plains population into Wynaad, began the troubles of the aboriginals.

Of the seventeen or eighteen tribes of this area, some like the Kurichiyas, Paniyas, Karimpalans, etc., number several thousands; while others like the Urali Kurumbars, Kunduvatiyans, Kadars, Uridavans, Kanaladis, Pathiyans and Kattunayakkans number only a few hundred and have been unable, on account of isolation and adverse conditions, to develop group life to any high level.

Since the introduction of European coffee cultivation into the Wynaad taluk, the jungle tribes and the serf groups who used to cultivate rice fields in that area have been attracted to the more profitable employment on coffee estates.

Podu cultivation, known as *punam* cultivation in Wynaad, is practised by the Kurichiyas and other agricultural tribes. The valleys of the Wynaad hills, particularly in the western half of the taluk, have been cleared and converted into wet rice fields. A good deal of this clearance was done in ancient days by the Kurichiyas. These fields are very fertile and the yield per acre is higher than that in most other parts of the Malabar district. Malaria, however, is the greatest enemy of man in Wynaad.

A brief account is given below of some of the tribes of this area.

The Edanadan Chettis:—The Edanadan Chettis are a tribe of agriculturists, said to have originally come to Wynaad

from Coorg. They speak a mixture of Kanarese and Malayalam. They follow the Makkattayam (patrilineal) law of inheritance. The status of a re-married widow is inferior. There are both Saivites and Vaishnavites among them.

The Wynaadan Chettis:—This class of Chettis is found in the eastern villages of Wynaad. They are also agriculturists by profession and follow the Marumakkathayam law of succession. Their language is Malayalam. It is said that the ancestors of the Wynaadan Chettis came from Dharapuram in Coimbatore and that they were Vellala Chettis. There are two distinct kinds of marriage rites among them, one which permits marital relations but does not permit the woman to live with her husband at his house, and the other, called 'Malakalyanam', which gives the woman the right to live with her husband. The Wynaadan Chettis are exclusively agriculturists, cultivating wet lands and also raising dry crops. There are five families recognised as heads of the community for all social purposes. They are a hard-working, law-abiding and peaceful people and are very fond of hunting. Annually, they stage a tiger hunt in which the tiger is captured in a net and speared to death. Though there are some substantial farmers among the Wynaadan Chettis, most of them are now poor and heavily indebted to the clever Moplah money-lenders of Sultans Battery. They are addicted to drink.

The Kurichiyas:—The largest number of Kurichiyas are found in the Wynaad taluk, but a few are found in the Kurumbranad, Kottayam and Calicut taluks. Out of a total number of 12,131 Kurichiyas in the State, 12,124 inhabit the Malabar District.

The Kurichiyas are, strictly speaking, the first agricultural tribe from the plains of Malabar who colonised Wynaad. They occupy the highest social position among the tribes of Wynaad, and feel themselves polluted by the approach or touch of other tribesmen such as the Paniyas. They are excellent bow-men, and played a great part in the Pazhassie (Pyche) Raja's rebellion at the beginning of the nineteenth century. They are a tribe of agriculturists who used to have their own lands. But most of them have been dispossessed

of their holdings by money-lenders and petty traders from the plains who have invaded Wynaad. They are, as a class, so honest and simple that they fall an easy prey to any exploiter.

The Kurichiyas follow a very rigid system of matriarchy. The head of the family—*karanavan*—his wife and children, his sisters' sons and their families live together in a large joint family numbering, sometimes, about fifty individuals. The members of a typical joint family live in five or six large-sized houses in a cluster. As soon as a boy is old enough to work he has to go and join his uncle's home which is his legal home; similarly, on the death of the husband, the widow and her children return to their ancestral home. The sons and daughters have no right to their father's property.

The Kurichiya territory is divided into several *nads,* and over each *nad* there is a headman. A council of elders presided over by the headman of each *nad* settles communal disputes. The Kurichiyas are so rigid in respect of untouchability and food taboos that for violation of rules in these matters, the punishment is often very severe. For social offences, men and women are often excommunicated; such individuals, nowa-days, become converts to Christianity. Most of the Christian Kurichiyas in Wynaad are, in fact, individuals who have been excommunicated for social offences. The orthodoxy of the Kurichiyas has some very interesting and inconvenient repercussions. Imprisonment to a Kurichiya is almost social death. In jail, he has to break the Kurichiya rule which prescribes that he should not eat food cooked by any but a Kurichiya or a Wynaad Nayar. Any threat of punishment by imprisonment will terrorise the Kurichiya to such an extent that he would part with all to escape the ordeal. His rigidity is a handicap to the Kurichiya in all walks of life including the education of his children.

Like most other tribesmen, the Kurichiyas are fond of alcoholic drinks. Because of administrative difficulties, the tapping of palm-trees for toddy was prohibited in the Wynaad taluk even before the prohibition days and this compelled the Kurichiyas to consume the very costly arrack, sold in licensed shops. For the various religious ceremonies, particularly

the annual 'kumbham' ceremony, the Kurichiyas were obliged to get toddy from the plains under a special licence. This proved to be very inconvenient and as a result several of the festivals were not celebrated. The Kurichiyas ascribe the occasional failure of the crops, the diseases of their children and cattle and most other ills to the consequent anger of the tribal gods.

The Kurichiyas are independent farmers, practising both wet cultivation and dry or *punam* cultivation. Many of them own cattle, but one very great handicap is the frequent breaking out of cattle diseases which destroy their stock. The Kurichiyas enjoy an aristocratic status. They are timid and avoid purchasing and selling in the open market. Instead of buying their necessities in the bazaars, they prefer to get them from visiting pedlars who sell things at exorbitant rates. Money accounts confuse them; they are so truthful that they pay whatever the creditor demands from them without ever questioning him. Because of their timidity and ignorance, many Kurichiyas who were once big landlords are now heavily indebted to the various money-lending classes of the small towns of Wynaad, such as Manantoddy and Sultan's Battery. The Kurichiyas have a natural aversion to work as coolies and take to such work only when they are helpless. There are only a few schools in Wynaad, and distances are long; these difficulties and the orthodoxy of the Kurichiyas prevent their children from receiving any education. The number of literates among this tribe can be counted on one's fingers.

The Mulla Kurumbars:—The Mulla Kurumbars differ very little in general appearance, dress, customs, etc., from the Kurichiyas. They speak Malayalam. They are fond of hunting, are very truthful and clean and are, like the Kurichiyas, chiefly agriculturists, practising both paddy cultivation on wet land and *punam* cultivation on the slopes of the hills. Except for the poorest among them, they do not usually work as coolies. But, unlike the Kurichiyas, the Mulla Kurumbars follow the Makkattayam law of succession. They are experts in hunting, and are good shots with their bows and arrows. During the Kottayam Raja's rebellion against the English, the Mulla Kurumbars fought valiantly on the side of the Raja.

Their women, like Kurichiya women, cover their breasts with a piece of cloth, the upper corners of which are fastened over the shoulder. They also live in very large joint families consisting of several brothers, their children and nephews.

They have four Kulams which are inherited through the mother. Their god is know as 'Kariappan'. The Kurichiyas and Mulla Kurumbars have the mutual feeling of being polluted by the other and, therefore, do not eat each other's food. Each married man lives in a separate hut. Like the Kurichiyas and Nayars, among the Mulla Kurumbars, there is the *tali kettu* ceremony, but the person who ties the *tali* is the girl's maternal uncle.

The Urali Kurumbars.—The Urali Kurumbars are also called Vettu Kurumbars. They speak a mixture of Kanarese and Malayalam. They are the chief artisan tribe of the Wynaad taluk, being skilled blacksmiths, carpenters, potters and basket-makers. They make pots without the help of any contrivance like the potter's wheel by scooping out the inside of a properly shaped lump of clay. These hand-made pots are fired in a crude kiln. Though the pots are thick and heavy, the Wynaad people fancy them and say that things cook better in the Urali pots. The manufactured iron goods available in the bazaar at a relatively cheap price make smithy of little profit for the Urali Kurumbars. Nowadays, some of them are employed by the Forest Department and by the local farmers to fell trees. They supplement the ragi and rice which they cultivate or purchase for food by collecting edible roots which fortunately are to be had in plenty in Wynaad.

The Kadars.—This community is found in Tonder Desam, Terriote and Mangalasseri of Wynaad taluk. They were Nayars who accompanied the Kottayam Raja along with the Kurichiyas and assumed the name of Kadars (forest men), as they settled in forests. They worship Malakari, a manifestation of Siva as hunter. Curiously enough their houses are known as *Illam*, which, in Malabar, is the name of a Nambudiri's house. They were the lords of the forests in ancient times, but now while a few of them cultivate wet lands, the majority of them live on hill cultivation and some even work as coolies. They are bowmen and are experts, like the Kurichiyas, in archery.

Besides worshipping their god, Malakari, they recognise another deity, Kariyathan. They follow Marumakkattayam and observe some of the customs of the Nayars. Paniyas and Naykans have to stand at a distance from them. The Kadars bathe if they touch a Tiyyan, the Nayars have only to bathe on touching a Kadar. The Brahmins and the Kadars pollute each other from a distance of seven feet.

The Thachanad Muppans.—The Thachanad Muppans are said to have come to Wynaad from Nilambur where only a few families of this tribe are now said to exist. A group of huts of Thachanad Muppans is known as a pathi, and for each pathi there are two chiefs, the senior one being called Muthali and junior, Eleri. The Muthali worships the male deity and the Eleri the female deity.

Tribes of the Agency Areas of Andhra

The forest-clad mountainous tracts of the East Godavari and Visakhapatnam districts of Andhra, over 6,000 square miles in area, are the scheduled or tribal areas of that State, with some twenty tribes speaking either Dravidian or Mundari dialects. These Agency tribes are on the whole more picturesque, better organised, more given to dance and music, and economically and technologically better equipped than the tribes further south in Peninsular India. Most of them have youth organisations somewhat like the *ghotul* dormitories. The history of the Agency areas during the British period has been marred by several *fituris* or tribal riots followed by the inevitable punitive expeditions to suppress them. The last of the *fituris* under the leadership of Sitarama Razu which synchronised with the non-co-operation movement was chiefly a reaction against the tyranny of petty officialdom. The administration of the Agency was a sort of simplified direct government by the Governor of the Province and his agents, but in spite of good intentions the special enactments such as the Agency Tracts Interest and Land Transfer Act of 1917, the Madras Debt Bondage Abolition Regulation of 1940, etc., did the tribes little good. Prohibition was also extended to the Agency Tracts, but it is doubtful whether the tribes understand it as a reform intended for their ultimate good. It is now realised that no

half measures will succeed here and the Government have, therefore, got plans ready for the all-round development of the tribal area including malaria control, land colonisation, and better communications. Brief accounts are given below of a few of the Agency tribes.

The Savaras :—This tribe is found not only in the Visakhapatnam Agency but also in the neighbouring areas of Orissa. The Savara country with the lofty hills, darting mountain streams and deep gaping valleys is picturesque, the terraced rice fields, too, adding to its beauty. The Savaras are remarkable irrigation engineers; they have ingeniously constructed bunds on mountain streams to water their fields. They have a primitive sense of village planning, for their houses are aligned in parallel rows which reflect orderliness. The Savaras are believed to be the descendants of the Sabaras referred to in the *Aitareya Brahmana*, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. The Telugus are supposed to have driven them to their present habitat. According to the Korni copper plate grant, Kamarnava, the founder of the Kalinga Ganga dynasty, defeated and killed (at Dantaruva) Sabaraditya, the ruler of the Chicacole area. Sabaraditya, as the name itself suggest, must have been of the Savara tribe. The wide distribution of the Savaras, references to them in the Vedas and the great Epics and the evidence of wars involving them point to their having had a very important position in ancient India.

The Gadabas :—Belonging, like the Savaras, linguistically to the Mundari branch, the bulk of the Gadabas are distributed in the Jeypore, Malkangiri, Koraput and Pattangi taluks. They are, like the Savaras, farmers, but hunting and fishing make additional contributions to their food supply. The Gadaba women are good at weaving bark fibre cloth on miniature looms of their own manufacture and the woven fabric is dyed by them with various vegetable dyes. In fact no Gadaba girl is considered qualified for marriage until she has acquired the requisite skill on the loom. A Swedish anthropologist who was studying the economic life of the Gadabas told me that it would be well worth the trouble of a fibre technologist to investigate the commercial possibilities

of the various vegetable fibres that are used by the Gadaba tribesmen. The enormous wire rings worn by Gadaba women as ear ornaments have also attracted considerable notice.

Very little of authoritarianism has developed among the Gadabas. The village headmen have very little power, the influence of a person in the community depending on his ability and economic resources. The village council holds its meetings on stone seats (sodor) under a tree. As these stone seats are associated with the spirits of the dead, the discussions are conducted in a sacred atmosphere and the decisions arrived at have added validity for that reason.

The Khonds :—Though this tribe is known as Khonds in official accounts of them, the correct name would be Kui. They are distributed both in Orissa and the Visakhapatnam Agency and are one of the largest of the Dravidian-speaking tribes. The sacrifice of human victims (meriahs)—always outsiders—which they practised as part of their agricultural and war rites made them notorious. The British had to suppress this custom by strong military action.

The Koyas :—These are the southernmost branch in the Godavari valley of the great Gond tribes, characterised by their bison-horn dances and occasional beef-eating. The word 'Koya' means hill-dweller. The tribe is divided into several occupational sub-tribes such as blacksmiths, carpenters, brass workers and basket-makers. Their history is a long tale of suffering and oppression by the Rohillas, by their landlords and more recently by money-lenders and other new types of exploiters from the plains. On the Hyderabad side of the Koya area, social workers have been active for some years in rehabilitating this tribe, but, on the whole, the economic distress of the Koyas is still most acute. During certain lean seasons of the year, food is so scarce that whole families, including children, live on tubers, tamarind seeds and palm juice.

The Konda Reddis :—This Telugu-speaking tribe shares the hill habitat with the Koyas. A peep into history shows that the Konda Reddis were once a ruling tribe, but worsted time and again, they became reconciled to the hills and

valleys. Though shorn of all glory, they retain some of the noble qualities of their aristocratic past. Their mode of life is almost the same as that of the Koyas except in the matter of beef-eating, widow marriage and other indices of Hinduisation. They are, however, much better farmers than the Koyas and more self-reliant. Free labour service for the landlords which is prohibited by law in the interests of the tribesmen still seems to be in existence as a pernicious survival.

Criminal Tribes

Exigencies of existence turned several tribes into professional criminals. The police measures under the Criminal Tribes Act (which was recently repealed) failed to create a favourable atmosphere for the reform of the so-called Criminal Tribes. The most interesting among the ex-criminal tribes of Madras and Andhra are the Koravas, Yerukulas, Kallars and Lambadis.

The Koravas were once a prosperous people engaged in trade on pack cattle, their sub-sections being named after the commodity they traded in. Their profession gave them intimate knowledge of places and peoples. Their expert knowledge was availed of by the rulers of the day who employed the Koravas as a kind of intelligence corps. Tippu Sultan seems to have employed them for espionage and for minor harassment of enemy camps. When the Koravas lost their traditional occupations, they took to organised thieving which they developed into a fine art. After their notification under the Criminal Tribes Act, thousands of them were removed from their homeland to the Criminal Tribes settlements, which were a humane version of concentration camps, mostly under missionary management.

The Lambadis were North Indian camp followers of invading armies who lost contact with their homes and became nomadic traders and herdsmen in the Deccan. They are a picturesque people, particularly the women in their Rajasthani costumes and loads of ornaments.

The Kallars of the southern Tamil districts, Madurai, Ramnad, Tanjore and Tiruchirapalli—once a tribe of warriors—claim to be the descendants of the royal Pandyas and

Cholas. The Raja of Pudukkottai belongs to the Kallar Tribe. The characteristic hunting weapon of the Kallars—the boomerang—is still used ritually and for the hunting of small game. The women with their enlarged ear holes, horse-hair neck-ornament (which signified the married state) had in the past as good a reputation for toughness as their menfolk. The Criminal Tribes Act was first applied to the Kallars in 1914, and reclamation work was done on an extensive scale by the Madras Police. Co-operative Credit Societies, Kallar Panchayats and special elementary schools did not do much to reform the Kallars, but after the repeal of the Criminal Tribes Act, educated members of the tribe have taken up the leadership of the community. The rehabilitation of the people is, however, inextricably bound up with the development of the unproductive land which the bulk of the Kallars inhabit.

Andhra, Coorg, Hyderabad, Madras, Mysore and Kerala have an estimated tribal population of about two million, the number of tribes being over sixty. Before Independence, there was no Central control over what little was done by the States in the interests of the tribes. Since most of the tribes were in areas controlled by the Forest Department, officers of the department had the additional duty of protecting the interests of the tribal people, particularly in the matter of wages. The Hyderabad Government was the first to formulate a broad-based tribal policy in consultation with anthropologists and place the tribes under the care of a special department of social service. The Chenchu reserve created in 1943, the appointment of an anthropologist as adviser for tribes and backward classes, periodical tribal durbars, the Gond and other tribal education schemes under which tribal teachers were trained to teach in Gondi and other tribal languages and the preparation of text-books in Gondi, the assignment of land for the tribes, the opening of rural and grain banks, etc., were some of the good things which the new department did for the benefit of the tribes. As the ground has been well prepared for social service in Hyderabad and the administrative machinery for the execution of the plans for tribal welfare has been functioning for

over a decade now, the tribes in Hyderabad are making rapid progress.

Work in the tribal areas is beset with difficulties and it will, therefore, take some time before other States are able to catch up with the progress made in Hyderabad. The Servants of India Society has opened several centres for tribal welfare in the Nilgiris, in Malabar and in Travancore-Cochin. The Medical Department of the Government of Madras has succeeded in eradicating venereal diseases rampant among the Todas and saved that tribe from extinction. It can truly be said that our tribal brethren are receiving due attention.

NOTE : Hyderabad and Andhra are referred to in this book as they existed before the Reorganisation of States.

THE ONGE OF LITTLE ANDAMAN

E. C. Buchi

Little Andaman is the southernmost of the 204 large and small islands which compose the Andamans. This jewel of an island, separated from the main group by a 32-mile wide shallow strait, extends over 26 miles from north to south and over 16 miles from east to west. Dense tropical forests cover the surface of the island and extensive coral reefs fringe the shores.

Since the second century after Christ, when Claudius Ptolemy first referred to the Andaman Islands, the Andamanese had such an evil reputation as to deter any explorer from attempting closer investigation. The natives, a most "brutish and savage race," were supposed to attack all strangers who landed or were wrecked upon their shores and to kill and eat those that were unfortunate enough to fall into their hands.

This indictment undoubtedly was partly true. The Andamanese showed a markedly hostile attitude towards anybody approaching their coasts. This may have been, however, a reaction to the treatment they received at the hands of Malayan slave-traders, who, it is believed, raided the islands from time to time.

The charge of cannibalism, on the other hand, was never proved. If the Andamanese had actually been cannibals, they must have abandoned this practice before the islands were occupied by the British. A. R. Brown suspects that this legend may have its origin in the fact that the Andamanese, in the north, at any rate, often disposed of the bodies of slain enemies by cutting them into pieces and burning them in fire.

The Andaman Islands were a constant threat to the trade route from India to countries further East. Many violent cyclonic storms strike the Bay of Bengal and ships approaching the Andaman coasts for shelter or for replenishing food

and water ran grave risks of attack. Being wrecked on the shore meant sure death. In order to eliminate this danger, attempts were made by the East India Company to establish a colony on the islands and to build a safe port. A successful undertaking was the creation of the Penal Settlement at Port Blair in 1858.

The people of the Andaman Islands, though divided into several groups according to differences of language and culture, can be classified into two main categories: (a) the Great Andaman group, including all natives of Great Andaman except the Jarawa in the interior of South Andaman, and (b) the Onge-Jarawa-Sentinelese group.

The Onge inhabit the island of Little Andaman, the Jarawa mainly the interior of South Andaman and the Sentinelese the North Sentinel Island. The last mentioned tribe are probably Jarawa who left the main body and settled on the North Sentinel Island. The Onge and Jarawa are believed to understand each other, whereas neither of them understands the Great Andaman tribes.

Today, the Great Andamanese group, pacified after the establishment of the Port Blair Settlement, is nearly extinct. The second division, however, which remained hostile and aloof from civilisation, still enjoys a prosperous existence.

Even today, an encounter with Jarawa means a fight. But in the past few years, it has proved less risky to meet an Onge. "How will they receive us, friendly or hostile?" was in everybody's mind when the INS Investigator stopped off Little Andaman in order to land our party. Through the field-glass I searched the shore. There a group of Onge—a bunch of dark, nearly naked pygmies—was running along the sandy beach, obviously agitated by the appearance of our boat. Small children and babies were among them—a good sign. If they were evilly disposed towards us, they would probably have removed the children and hidden themselves in order to ambush us. Moreover, nobody seemed to carry weapons. They obviously had decided to receive us in a friendly way. I arranged that the first landing boat should carry presents for the Onge in order to convince them of our friendly intentions. As they saw our rowing boat leaving

the frigate, they brought their outrigger canoes into the water and came to meet us through the heavy surf. Shouting and gesticulating and laughing, they turned their canoes and accompanied us to the shore.

As soon as I jumped into the sand I was surrounded by a joyful crowd. Small strips of red cloth and tobacco leaves were accepted by them with enthusiasm and they could easily be persuaded, by means of signs, to help us to land our equipment, to clear a place in the forest and to establish our camp there.

One is always inclined to feel a little superior in the company of small people, and when they are so small as the Onge, one is tempted to treat them as children. Nothing could be more wrong. These pygmies display a dignified self-conscious bearing, and to ignore their dignity could easily lead to serious consequences.

As already mentioned, the Onge are of a dwarfish stature; men measure on an average about 148 cm., women about 139 cm. There is, however, nothing abnormal about them. The body is perfectly proportioned and shows well-developed muscles. The head is slightly roundish and the face mostly short and broad, often with a tendency to prognathism. The nose is flat and broad, the lips usually moderately thick but sometimes also everted. The skin, when covered with dust and reddish clay, often looks dark brown; when washed it is black with a bluish tinge. The same can be said of the hair. Remarkable, however, is its shape. The short hair—of head and body—is spiralled up into small cones, the skin between the cones being visible. The head thus looks as though sprinkled over with peppercorns. The amount of hair on the face and body is scanty; a total absence, however, could not be observed. The iris is dark brown and even the white of the eye has a brown tinge.

A peculiar feature of the women is the so-called steatopygia, the enormously developed buttocks. They project so much backward as to form a balcony on which children can freely stand.

Men usually wear nothing but a plain rope belt. The rope, as well as the thread, is made from bark fibre. The belt is

used mainly to carry the primitive knife. It has now become the custom to wear between the legs a strip of cloth, not broader than two to three inches, which is tied to a rope in front and at the back. It is, however, not quite clear how this cloth comes into their hands.

Women wear a belt either of Pandanus leaf, one to two inches broad, or of a large number of threads. Suspended from the front of the belt is a tassel of fibre made from young unopened palm leaf. The thread used may be of brown colour and it sometimes looks like being lined with gold when twisted together with strips of the bright yellow skin of the roasted pods of Dendrobium orchid. Strings of Dentalium shells are worn as necklaces and bracelets, sometimes also by males.

The Onge decorate their faces and sometimes the whole body with clay ranging in colour from white to red. The clay is mixed with red ochre, water, saliva and turtle fat. The role of decoration belongs to the women. They decorate the family members and afterwards one another with obvious devotion. The clay paste is carefully applied with the fingers and evenly distributed over the skin. Mostly, and especially on the face, a design is now produced by passing the spread fingers over the smear, removing the clay with the fingertips, so as to leave a system of lines along which the black skin shows through. The patterns thus produced vary according to the artistic skill of the painter. Besides improving the looks, the painting has its medical uses too. In cases of illness, the aching parts of the body are painted in order to cure the patient.

The natives of Little Andaman are divided into various septs or local groups with clearly defined hunting grounds. Such a local group, about 10 families headed by a chief, builds in its permanent encampment a large communal hut, roughly circular in form, thatched with mats of palm leaf. In the centre of the hut is an open space for communal cooking and for dancing. Along the circumference of the hut, each family has a special portion for its personal use. A raised cane platform serves as the family bed and on the fire beside it the family meal is cooked.

Khond bride

Chenchu bowmen

Abor warrior

Abor children

Abor girl

Dubla girls from South Gujarat

Kadar woman

Lambadi women

When the Onge leave their headquarters on hunting expeditions or for collecting honey, they erect temporary sheds for themselves. Our arrival was a big event and the local inhabitants would not miss any of the happenings in our camp. Though their communal hut was only about five minutes away from us, they at once began to build temporary sheds beside our tents. First a cane platform was erected, roughly three feet broad, four feet long and one foot high, to which a lean-to of leaves was added. The arrangement of all these sheds facing the central open space gives the impression of a village.

Gradually, other septs, hearing of our presence, joined the camp and it was interesting to observe how the Onge greet one another. The residents of the place sit on the floor and the visiting friends sit on their laps; thus they embrace each other without speaking for a long time, sometimes up to 15 to 20 minutes. Longer the separation, the longer the time taken for embracing.

The daily life of the Onge is simple. Shortly after sunrise, life in the camp begins to stir. A morning meal is prepared from the remainder of the previous day's meal. Then the hunting parties, sometimes including women. set out. In the camp, mothers attend to their children, make baskets, nets, etc., and carefully keep the fires alive. The inhabitants of Little Andaman do not know how to make a fire, but they are experts at selecting wood which would smoulder for a long time. When travelling or hunting, a piece of smouldering wood is carefully carried along.

The Onge live entirely on the natural products offered by the sea and the forest. From the former they have turtles, fish, crustaceans and molluscs; in the forest they hunt wild pigs, collect honey and some roots.

The hunters are armed with bow and arrow. The bow is made from a straight piece of wood, planed and without any adornment. According to the size of the bow, one or more bark strips of the Ficus laccifera are twisted together to make the bow string. Two kinds of arrows are used. For shooting fish the arrow point consists of a sharpened iron wire, whereas pigs are killed with arrows with a lancet

shaped iron-head. The metal is obtained from ships wrecked on the shore in bygone days and is then filed with stone to the required shape.

Honey is collected in buckets made either from a log of soft wood, hollowed out with a chisel, or from a single joint of a giant bamboo piece which had drifted away from Burma to the shores of Little Andaman. The roots collected as well as the personal belongings are carried in a neatly woven cane basket. Buckets and baskets are carried on the back by means of a cane strip fastened to the container and passing over the head.

Later in the afternoon the camp is seized with excitement. Hunters return with their prey, women bring firewood and water and the preparations for the evening meal, the main meal of the day, begin. Various kinds of tins, thrown overboard by some passing ship and washed ashore, serve as cooking pots. The art of making pottery is not known to the Onge of today, but the large number of pottery fragments found everywhere on the island show that this art must have been known to their ancestors. Smaller tins as well as Pinna shells serve for plates when the food is not eaten directly from the family cooking pot, and Nautilus shells form quite convenient drinking cups.

After the evening meal, when night falls, the Onge sometimes spend the time singing and dancing. Men and women stand in a row opposite each other, the place being lighted up by resin fires. Bending their bodies slightly forward, flexing their knees, and by moving the hips forward and upward, at the same time lifting the heels, the dancers straighten the body and lean backward. Then, relaxing the body, they bend forward again, simultaneously moving the hips backward and downward to the starting position. The hips thus describe a circle in the perpendicular plane. The arms, hanging down at the sides, follow the movement of the hips. This cycle of movements is continuously repeated as long as the song lasts.

In another kind of dance, the dancers hop on one foot beating with the heel of the other foot upward between the

buttocks, thus producing a noise similar to a rhythmical clapping of hands.

The Onge, as all Andamanese, are considered to be the survivors of a primitive race which once occupied the whole of South Asia. Owing to their isolation in the islands and their hostility towards all strangers, they have been able to remain almost free from outside influences, whereas their relatives on the mainland, oppressed by the invading peoples, have either died out or been absorbed by them. Only on the Malay Peninsula, the Semang, obviously of the same race, have kept themselves pure to some extent.

Some scientists go so far as to say that all pygmies, from Africa to the farthest East, are descendants of a common old stock. This assumption is tempting as all these groups have certain physical characteristics, such as stature, complexion, hair form, in common. A relationship, however, can be established with some certainty only when the genetic constitution is found to be similar. Our investigations on genetic characteristics (blood groups of the various systems, Sicklemia and Secretor phenomenon) of the Onge have revealed that they are typically Asian in this respect, showing no resemblance to the African pygmies.

Of course, we must assume that the physical characteristics mentioned above are also somehow inherited, though the exact mode of inheritance is not yet known. Thus, we have genetic characteristics *pro* and *contra* relationship between the two groups of pygmies. The question which immediately arises is: "Which genetic traits are then to be relied on for drawing deductions?" The answer is simple: "Those traits which give its owner neither an advantage nor a disadvantage in any environment."

As far as we know today, blood groups have no bearing on adaptability to the external environment. The situation is different with most physical characteristics. The dark pigmentation protects an individual from excessive radiation of the tropical sun. The short stature enables the pygmy to slip through the narrow meshes of the dense forests where a normal-sized individual has to cut his way through warily

and where long hair might get entangled with twigs and thorns and thus be a hindrance to its owner.

A dark coloured pygmy with short hair is obviously a perfect adaptation to the tropical sun and to the dense forests. He has better prospects for hunting and supporting a family; he, therefore, has better chances also for producing offspring; hence in this special environment his type will spread from generation to generation.

The physical resemblance of African and Andamanese pygmies might, therefore, easily be explained as the product of a parallel evolution due to a similarity of environment—a parallel evolution of types from different stocks, as indicated by differences in the distribution of the various blood properties in the two groups.

If this theory is correct, and a good deal can be said in its favour, then the pygmies cannot be looked upon as an 'old and primitive' form; physically they are not at the beginning but at the end of a specialisation. Moreover, their type is not the product of a planless evolution; it is a type marvellously adapted to the environment they live in.

In this high specialisation, however, lies also a great danger. The adaptation is not only physical; it is a complete biological adaptation to the given circumstances. Contact with civilisation changes these circumstances and causes situations for which these people are not prepared, conditions against which they have no powers of resistance. Changes in their way of living, the introduction of diseases and luxuries previously unknown to them may have a catastrophic effect and may lead to their complete extinction in a short time. It is consoling to know that attempts are being made to spare the Onge such a fate. Contact with civilisation cannot be avoided today. The authorities, however, are trying their best to keep the destructive influences away and to bring these survivors of a special branch of mankind under control without destroying their normal environment.

TRIBAL LANGUAGES

Suniti Kumar Chatterji

In India we were never conscious of our aboriginal population as forming an element distinct from the ordinary body politic. The attitude of the Anglo-Saxon race towards the original peoples of the countries colonised by them gave rise to the concept of the 'Aborigines'. This idea, though of European origin, seemed to throw a new light on a generally accepted social phenomenon in India and was adopted by the average educated Indian. Thus was started a tendency to look upon our backward peoples, particularly when they lived in isolated and self-contained communities, as distinct groups, culturally as well as ethnically. The traditional attitude towards these people was dominated by the Indian notion of caste. The aboriginals were just members of their own group or caste, with their acknowledged place in the scheme of things, although they were not always within the Hindu fold.

The people of India are generally Mestiz and are the result of a fusion of the various distinct racial elements which have found a place in India, viz., the Aryan, Dravidian, Austric or Nishada and Mongoloid or Kirata. All these various peoples have been brought together by miscegenation and by acculturation into a composite group, acknowledging a culture which is dominated by the Brahmin and has the Sanskrit language as its vehicle of expression. Any backward 'Aboriginal' was thus looked upon as prospective member of the Hindu society, if he was not already one.

Progressive acculturation, brought about with sympathy, was the tacitly accepted policy of Hindu society towards these peoples. This policy was never one of segregation. 'Tribal Peoples' was the term which was preferred, and the Indian expression 'Adivasi' or 'Dwellers from the Beginning' is the commonly accepted description for them in modern India. Adopting 'Bhumiputra (Boemi-poetra)', the Sanskrit word

used in Indonesia to indicate 'the People of the Country' or literally 'Sons of the Soil', some writers in India have sought to make it applicable to our primitive peoples, but this word has not yet been generally accepted.

Our Adivasis form just a section of the Indian population. They are a distinct group, because they lack the intellectual alertness and adaptability, the education and culture which we find in more sophisticated communities. They, therefore, deserve special attention and care from the State. They have to be approached from a wider human point of view—a scientific point of view, that of the Science of Anthropology. The study of their languages as an element or expression of their culture thus assumes an important aspect.

Formerly, the Hindu or Muslim neighbours of the Adivasi peoples picked up their languages only to be in touch with them in business matters for the barter of goods, or for employing them as agricultural labourers. Incidentally, the Adivasis also found it profitable to know the languages of their more cultivated neighbours. There was, however, no systematic study of their languages among the educated Indians generally.

The study of Adivasi languages in India was taken up by the Christian missionaries of various denominations; and their object was primarily to render the Christian scriptures into Adivasi languages to facilitate the tribal peoples' conversion to and their continuance in the new faith. Some of these missionaries were also actuated by a broader scientific attitude—the attitude of curiosity, to know more about their fellow human beings.

In this way, the study of the languages of these primitive peoples was started in India from about the middle of the last century, and considerable progress has since been made in this direction. The scholarly work done, for example, by the Scandinavian missionaries in the linguistics and literature of Santali, numerically the most important tribal language of India, has to be mentioned with the highest praise.

The languages of India now fall under four great linguistic families: (1) the Indo-European or Aryan, which comprises the great languages of Northern India and the Deccan, such as

Hindi, Bengali, Panjabi, Gujarati, Marathi and Oriya; (2) the Dravidian languages of Central and Southern India: these include four great literary languages, Telugu, Kannada, Tamil and Malayalam, besides a few less important ones, some of which are current among the Adivasis, both in South India and in Central and Eastern India. The people of the North speaking the Aryan languages are, however, never included in the category of Adivasis, but are still counted as Adivasis, largely because of their backward state.

The other two language-families in India have never been properly cultivated, except in two or three instances; and they are current among the more backward Adivasi groups. One of these two language-families is the Austric speech-family in its Austro-Asiatic branch, under which come the Kol or Munda speeches of Central and Eastern India, Khasi of Assam, Nicobarese in the Nicobar Islands, and a large number of languages and dialects current in Burma, Thailand and Indo-China (Viet-Nam). Another branch of this great Austric speech-family is the Austronesian, which comprises the languages of the Indonesian group including Malay—now the national language of Indonesia—and the languages of Micronesia, Malenesia and Polynesia. The other is the Sino-Tibetan family: this includes the tribal languages of the various peoples belonging to the different ramifications of the Mongoloid race—the Indo-Mongoloids—who are found throughout the southern slopes of the Himalayas, from Northern Panjab to Bhutan, and also in Northern and Eastern Bengal and in Assam.

The Austric-speaking peoples and the Mongoloids, as described above, together with some tribes speaking Dravidian languages, comprise the Adivasi population of India at the present day. We may now make a brief survey of their languages.

Dravidian Adivasi Languages

Apart from the four great advanced Dravidian languages mentioned before, there are two more which are spoken by peoples who are fairly well advanced in the scale of civilisation, although their languages are not much cultivated. Those speaking these languages prefer to use, for education and

literature, the contiguous advanced Dravidian speech, namely Kannada. These two peoples, who are not to be counted among the Adivasis, are the Tulus (152,000) and the Kodagus or the people of Coorg (45,000).

The Gonds, numbering 1,865,000, are a Dravidian-speaking Adivasi group, who are scattered in Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh. Their language, Gondi, has no literary life, and the Gondi-speaking people are no longer a compact bloc. Everywhere, with their advance in life, they acquire the languages of the neighbouring peoples, like Hindi and Marathi, and in some cases Oriya—all Aryan languages—and also Telugu which is a cultured Dravidian language.

Then there are the Kandhs (586,000) in Orissa who speak the Kui language; the Kurukh or Oraons (1,038,000) in Bihar and Orissa; and Malto (71,000) in the Rajmahal Hills in Bihar. There is no literary life among the Oraons, and in spite of their number they as well as the Kandhs and the Maler people who speak Malto, are gradually merging with the Aryan-speaking peoples, by accepting their languages. Then there are the Brahui (207,000) in Baluchistan (Pakistan), who form the remnant of a great Dravidian bloc which was in existence in ancient times before the coming of the Aryans; and there are the Todas, numbering only 600 souls, confined to the Nilgiri Hills, round about Ootacamund.

The Dravidian languages are "agglutinative" in structure, and in this way resemble the Ural-Altaic languages, including such speeches as Magyar or Hungarian, Finnish, and Turki and Mongol. Of this Dravidian family we have literary specimens in Tamil and the other Dravidian languages going back to the early centuries of the Christian era. But the Adivasis who speak these languages are far less advanced than their other linguistic kinsmen.

Adivasi Languages of Austric Origin

These include, firstly, the languages of the Kol or Munda group; Santali (over 2½ million), found in Bihar, Orissa, Bengal and Assam; Mundari (650,000), Ho (450,000), Kharia (180,000), Bhumij (113,000), and a few others, which belong to Bihar. The language of the Korku (160,000) is spoken

in Madhya Pradesh and Berar, while Savara (196,000) and Gadaba (44,000) are spoken in Orissa. Outside of this Kol or Munda group, there is the language of the Khasis in Assam (234,000), and of the Nicobarese (10,000).

Those who speak the Austric language must learn some contiguous language, such as Bengali or Bihari, Oriya or Marathi, or Hindi. Their speeches, which have a value for the philologist, were reduced to writing only in the 19th century by Christian missionaries. Santali and Mundari have folk-tales and songs which are quite distinctive, and very good collections of these have been made by the Scandinavian missionaries as well as by Indian scholars. Khasi and Santali have been recognised by the University of Calcutta as "minor vernaculars", but there has recently been a deep penetration of the greater part of the 'Austric' territory by Aryan languages, forcing the Santals and others to be bilingual. Although these languages are treated with sympathy and their study is encouraged by the Government and in some cases by the Universities, the ultimate disappearance of the Austric speech seems inevitable with the Aryanisation of the Austric speakers. Their disintegration might, however, be delayed in certain cases where there is comparative isolation, and here tribal consciousness is at work, as in the case of the Khasis, for example.

The Austric languages belong to a special linguistic family embracing a wide range of speeches spreading from Central India. right through Burma, to Viet-Nam, Malaya, Indonesia and the islands of the East Pacific. The Kol languages of India have various derivative or formative elements in them, such as the prefix, suffix and infix. The formation of words by means of these affixes is very clear, but some words tend to become rather long. Large masses of Austric speaking people, who at one time lived in the riverain plains of Northern India, have now merged in the Aryan-speaking Hindu and Muslim masses in Northern India. They adopted the Aryan language, but some of their speech-habits affected also the speech of their adoption. In this way the students of linguistics have found an Austric substratum in the present-day Aryan languages.

Adivasi Languages of Sino-Tibetan or Tibeto-Chinese Origin

As observed before, the Mongoloid Adivasis are confined to the southern slope of the Himalayas and to North and East Bengal and Assam. Nepal, Sikkim, the Darjeeling District of West Bengal and Assam are the tracts where the Mongoloid peoples, speaking different forms of the Sino-Tibetan speech, are concentrated. Most of the Sino-Tibetan dialects are numerically insignificant speeches and are current among very small tribes, usually having no literary activity. These languages have been sub-divided into various branches within the Sino-Tibetan family. Formerly they were divided into two main branches: (1) Tibeto-Burma, and (2) Siamese-Chinese. A more recent classification of the Sino-Tibetan speeches made by the American philologist, Robert Shafer, has divided these languages into seven branches: (1) Sinitic, (2) Manic, (3) Bodic, (4) Baric, (5) Daic or Thai, (6) Karenic, and (7) Burmic. It is not necessary to go into a detailed study of the classification of these speeches.

In the Himalayan regions, as in Nepal and Darjeeling, the Tibeto-Burman branch is the only one which is represented. In Assam also, most of these speeches belong to the same Tibeto-Burman branch, except in the extreme east of Assam where Khamti belongs to the Siamese-Chinese branch. To the same branch belonged Ahom, the extinct language of the Thai conquerors of Assam, who to some extent cultivated it.

The Adivasi tribes of Nepal, Sikkim and Darjeeling who speak Tibeto-Burman are gradually beginning to adopt the Aryan language of Nepal—Parbatiya or Gorkhali or Khaskura, or Nepali, as it is officially described by the Nepal Government. Among these tribes, we must note the following groups: Murmi (43,000); Magari (18,000); Lepcha (25,000); Kanauri (26,000); and Kiranti (88,000).

In Nepal we have the Newar people who number probably 300,000 and for the last 2,000 years they have been an advanced people who accepted Buddhism and Brahmanism as also the Sanskrit language. It was the Newar people who built up the great culture of Nepal with its marvellous art, architecture and social system. They also produced quite a remarkable literature in the Newari language. The Newars

therefore, cannot be classed among the Adivasis; to this day they have maintained quite a vigorous literary and cultural life. It was the Newars who had preserved the Sanskrit literature of Mahayana Buddhism, and they must be recognised among the advanced races who have long been within the fold of Indian civilisation.

In both Sikkim and Bhutan we have settlers from Tibet who form the ruling aristocracy, and their affinities are with the Tibetans of Lhasa. In North Bengal and East Bengal (Tripura area) and in the Brahmaputra valley of Assam in the Garo Hills and the Kachar District, there are remnants of the great Bodo people, who are an important Tibeto-Burman group of North-Eastern India and have now largely become absorbed in the Hindu masses of North Bengal, East Bengal and Assam. There are, however, still some tribes which retain their language; the Bodo language is now current among some 911,000 people. But these people have no cultural or literary life, apart from that of the surrounding Assamese or Bengali speaking peoples.

In the North Assam frontier tracts, there are some other Tibeto-Burman tribes like the Abors and Miris and the Daflas. Within Assam State, there are also the Mikirs (126,000) in the Mikir Hills to the south of the Brahmaputra, and the Nagas (349,000) who are split up into a group of different tribes. Naga tribes frequently do not understand each other's dialect, like the Angami, the Sema, the Ao and the Tangkul, and they have remained exceedingly backward; and some of their languages have been reduced to writing only recently by the Christian missionaries.

To the south of the Nagas we have the Tibeto-Burmans of the Kuki-Chin group, in language allied very closely to the Burmese. The most important Kuki-Chin people are the Meitheis or Manipuris (392,000)—a very advanced tribe. They accepted Hinduism probably as early as the 15th century, if not earlier, and in the middle of the 18th century they adopted the faith of the Vaishnavas belonging to the Chaitanya or Bengal school. They have built up a noteworthy literature in their language which is now written and printed in the Bengali-Assamese character, and their culture is most remarkable among those who speak the Sino-Tibetan language in

the extreme east of India. A long poem of 38,000 lines was recently composed in Manipuri on the popular theme of the love of the hero Khamba for the princess Thoibi (12th century). Incidentally, there is a remarkable drama literature in the Manipuri language. The Lushais (60,000) are another progressive Kuki-Chin people.

The Sino-Tibetan languages belong to the same family as the four great languages of civilisation, namely, the Chinese, Siamese, Burmese and Tibetan. They share certain common characteristics. They are, for instance, 'isolating languages', in which there is no room for inflections, and the relationship among words was indicated originally by means of root-words used in special contexts. In their modern forms, they have become mostly 'tone languages', in which the intonation or modulation of voice has a significant value. Thus a word like *ma* would mean a number of different things, according to the tone of voice in which it is pronounced, whether that tone or pitch is high or low, rising or falling, and so on. Most of these languages are now written in the Roman script, excepting Newari and Manipuri which use scripts of Indian origin (Bengali-Assamese for Manipuri, and Nagari for Newari).

HEALTH MEASURES IN NEFA

Lt. Col. J. N. Ghosh

Thirty thousand square miles of land, hardly any of which is plain, had remained hidden for long behind primeval forests and formidable mountains along the North East Frontier of India. Few knew that these mountains, cut and chopped by innumerable streams, had in their lap half a million people, a large proportion of whom were splendid specimens of humanity. Even fewer knew their real character, actual needs and attitude to life. To the outside world they were known as tribesmen—and regarded as aggressive, suspicious and resentful of outsiders; dirty, non-co-operative and superstitious.

Administration has been in existence in these areas for a long time but it cannot be said that it knew the people deeply or their problems fully in the days before Independence. In those days, no administrator ever lived with the people and so it came to be said that "for centuries the real ruler of the tribal people here has been Environment."

People in NEFA build houses and establish villages on hill-tops which are widely separated from one another. As a result, water supply for domestic use is far removed. Safe drinking water is not easily available in sufficient quantities, and the people cannot keep themselves clean. While springs exist in some villages, the sources of water supply are generally stagnant pools of polluted seepage water or fast flowing streams at the foot of the hills.

Houses in the western half of Kameng Frontier Division—one of the five Divisions under NEFA—are masonry constructions but in the rest of NEFA, people live in pile-dwellings raised well above the ground to avoid the damp and to keep a stock of firewood, pigs and, occasionally, mithuns (a cross between buffalo and cow, highly prized for its meat). Inside the house, in the centre of each room, there is a place where a fire burns and mostly smoulders throughout day and night. It gives them warmth, but also many eye diseases. The smoke

cannot easily escape from the room because there are no windows or chimneys in these houses. Hundreds of tribal people suffer from chronic conjunctivities and quite a few of them lose their eye-sight due to the effects of smoke.

A central fire-place in this damp and cold region is a most welcome and attractive thing, but it has a hypnosis : It does not allow people to move away easily from it. Thus, through centuries, a habit has developed in these people to spit where they may. Consequently, lung diseases are common among them. This is a great problem both for the tuberculosis worker and the health educator.

Agricultural practices and climate exercise a strong influence on the health of rural people and on services designed to promote welfare of such people. Let us then see their effect in NEFA.

Except in its extreme western corner, it is damp everywhere in NEFA. Although the regular monsoon begins in April and continues heavy, to as much as 200 inches in the year, until October, it may rain at any time, turning the paths maintained by Government into nightmare lanes of slippery mud. During the monsoon, village approaches are under tall grass, so high and thick that they altogether disappear from view; on many occasions, portions of hills slide far down into the stream, washing away the tracks. Food stocks run down and drinking water drawn from streams becomes turbid from suspended matter. Malnutrition, diarrhoea and dysentery follow, but a man with a chest of medicine is not easy to find. It needs more than ordinary courage and tremendous physical strength to walk over these hills when it rains incessantly, day after day.

A little over one-third of the total population of NEFA lives at altitudes around 5,000 ft. It is warm during summer in these low hills and therefore this population is exposed to the risk of malaria; and, indeed, malaria used to take a heavy toll of human life, year after year.

In the western part of the Kameng Division, settled cultivation is in general practice and, so, the people use manure—mostly human and animal excreta. Collections of these are

kept in pits where flies breed in millions and produce a special problem.

Shifting cultivation (Jhuming) is the rule over practically all other parts of NEFA. Jhum lands are normally at some distance from villages and hence, during sowing and harvesting seasons, families move for temporary periods into their agricultural fields. This practice is a problem for the medical officer engaged on Malaria Eradication Programme, to which he has yet to find an effective answer.

Flies and mosquitoes are the principal insect enemies of man in this region. It has, however, been possible to keep their ravages down to a great extent, but there are other pests —the dim-dam fly and leeches—which are a torment in NEFA and against which no battle has yet been fought.

Medical Relief

Before Independence, medical relief was available only in a few official centres, though doctors accompanied expeditions into the interior. How small was the scale of that relief in those days can be judged by the fact that, in 1946-47, a total expenditure of Rs. 1.52 lakhs was incurred towards the maintenance of 13 hospitals and dispensaries and one Leprosy Colony.

By 1951 the administration of the area was truly established for the people. Greater friendship and understanding grew between the people and the officials who were now living and moving among them freely. The distinguishing characteristics of the people began to unfold themselves and their needs came to be understood. The hill people were now eager to have the benefits of modern medicine and, therefore, NEFA established its own medical service with a Chief Medical Officer at its head. There were then 7 hospitals, 30 outdoor dispensaries and 2 mobile units.

During the First Five Year Plan, a number of medical and health schemes were implemented through patient, persevering and tactful approach to the people. Malaria, the killer among diseases in NEFA, was being fought, in 1955, by 27 anti-malaria units, in 220 villages with a population of approximately 57,000; a beginning was made to tackle the

problem of endemic goitre—a disease which not only gives ugliness but produces deaf mutism and cretinism, and a preliminary study was completed about the reported decrease in population among the Singpho tribe which live in the valleys of Noa-Dihing and Tenga-pani. By the end of 1955, NEFA (including the Tuensang Division which at the end of 1957 was transferred to Naga Hills-Tuensang area) had 19 hospitals, 39 dispensaries, 20 mobile health units and 3 leprosy colonies. Significant success was also achieved in the search for the mosquito to control malaria.

In a difficult terrain like NEFA these were encouraging physical achievements. But the most significant of all achievements during these five years was the evolution of a philosophy for medical men who may come to extend the healing, friendly hand.

Modern medicine had, and still has, to face many difficulties in NEFA. In tribal society, disease is generally held to be caused by hostile spirits, ghosts or by the breach of some taboo. The tribesmen have their own methods of diagnosis and cure and they place more faith in their own medicine-men—the priests. Where then was the scope for a modern medical man to use his scientific knowledge and skill and build his reputation?

Recognising, therefore, that faith heals and medicine cures, NEFA medical men gradually accepted the suggestion that the doctor and the medicine-man should learn to be, "not rivals, but allies." Patients in hospitals are now allowed the consolations of the tribal priests, and, in conformity with the faith of the people, altars are erected and charms to drive away the spirits of disease are displayed in the compounds of NEFA hospitals and dispensaries.

Second Five Year Health Plan

The Second Five Year Health Plan for NEFA estimated to cost Rs. 80.42 lakhs, was designed to improve the general level of health of the people and to provide 978 hospital beds, that is, one bed per 655 population in the Agency. Schemes have, therefore, been under implementation to spread health education among the masses, control endemic goitre and other

communicable diseases and improve rural water supply. Among other schemes are the establishment of health units, each of which is to provide public health and medical cover to 20-30 villages; a Training and Research Centre to train multi-purpose health workers and junior nurses (auxiliary nurses-*cum*-midwives) from among local boys and girls and to undertake research work on medical and health problems peculiar to the area; a Medical Store Depot to help in the timely supply of medicines to health units; three general hospitals with special beds for tuberculosis; a 50-bed tuberculosis hospital, and a Hansen's Disease (leprosy) sanatorium in addition to improving the three existing sanatoria; and the rehabilitation of the blind and victims of tuberculosis and leprosy.

Achievements

Today, Malaria is no longer the chief disease. During 1953, in the North East Frontier Agency (excluding Tuensang Frontier Division) out of a total of 1,87,000 patients, there were 61,009 cases of malaria, whereas in the year 1959, malaria cases numbered 10,371 out of a total of 2,23,172 patients treated. An estimated population of 1,90,823 living in 40,628 houses in the malaria affected areas of the Agency needs protection against malaria mainly through residual application of D.D.T. to their houses. It was possible to protect, during 1959, a population of 1,55,179 living in 32,497 houses.

A distressing and disfiguring skin disease from which thousands in northern Subansiri and north-west Siang suffered for centuries was at last correctly diagnosed, in 1957, as Tinea imbricata and an effective treatment schedule found for it. About 50 per cent of the people in NEFA suffer from visible manifestation of endemic goitre. Arrangements have, therefore, been finalised for the distribution of 590 maunds of iodised salt per month among the population in those areas where prevalence of goitre is high. When larger quantities become available, the fortified salt will be the only form of common salt in use in all areas under the Agency.

Gastro-intestinal disorders, still very high in incidence, will cease to be a health problem only when the people have

become conscious of healthful living, when a safe water supply is available in the villages and when the level of food production is sufficiently high to keep the people away from eating, during lean months, decomposed meat and jungle produce which are hard to digest. Measures have been taken to bring about a change in all these matters. Health posters with tribal background are displaced and explained to children in the elementary schools, and to outdoor patients in the Health Units; 138 potential village leaders (Yame Rotung in the Siang Division) have been trained in elementary hygiene and sanitation, and safe and adequate water supply has so far been provided to 151 villages. In addition, 10 local boys have been trained as Health Assistants and 19 girls are being trained as Junior Nurses in the Health Training and Research Centre.

Tuberculosis and leprosy are being controlled by isolation of infective cases in the hospitals and sanatoria and by immunising people with B.C.G. Vaccine. The B.C.G. campaign was taken up in the Agency in February 1957, and by the end of 1959, over 30,000 persons were tuberculin tested and 8,034 people vaccinated.

A leper is unfortunately a cursed individual wherever he may find himself and whatever his condition may be. Even an arrested non-infective patient who is physically fit cannot stay in his village and engage himself in any occupation, in isolation from others. Through sustained and intensive efforts, it has now been possible to make the people in parts of the Siang Frontier Division realise that leprosy is a disease and that patients medically declared to be non-infective may pursue their own profession in their respective villages, staying away from others. Thus became successful for the first time in 1959 our efforts to rehabilitate arrested non-infective cases of leprosy, in their own villages and on land contributed by the village councils. And we were able to give a happy send-off from the Sanatorium at Along, in the Siang Frontier Division, to twenty-seven persons for whom life was once a misery and curse.

Investigation in the efficacy of local medicinal herbs and plants is being systematically conducted. A good discovery

may bring to the tribal people a source of income as indeed it has with the finding of a market for the herb known locally as "Omerirko" or "Arong" and, botanically as *Coptis Teeta,* Wall.—an all round tonic with perhaps anti-diabetic properties. Since 1956, at least twenty different herbs and plants have been analysed but only two of these, besides *Coptis Teeta,* Wall., have aroused scientific interest. Present indications are that one of these herbs has tremendous potentialities as it is said to possess properties comparable to, if not better than, Cocaine.

The facts and figures presented in the foregoing paragraphs show the many and diverse difficulties which members of the medical profession have to face to preserve life and promote health among the people in NEFA. The medical staff, who accepted the challenge a decade ago, worked tenaciously and perseveringly to help the people realise on their own the blessings of modern medicine; they suffered in silence the isolation and privations of life in the remotest hills of India and they sacrificed their professional pride to experiment upon the doctrine: "modern medicine should build itself up on tribal tradition." They have been largely successful; they have reduced much of the human sufferings and won over the minds and hearts of the people. Much more, however, remains to be done to add to the people's happiness and the thrill of bringing this about will have to be shared with younger pioneers of modern medicine.

ROAD BUILDING IN NEFA

K. L. Mehta

The North East Frontier Agency, which curves like a giant horse-shoe astride the Brahmaputra Valley, can no longer be described as the 'forgotten frontier' as was done by a writer only a couple of years ago. This is because of the recent successes achieved in the task of carrying the good things of civilization to the hitherto neglected inhabitants of this region, quite apart from developments on the international border which have come in for a great deal of limelight lately. The carrying out of this task not only brought us into intimate contact with the people of the Agency but, having successfully gone through a period of trial and error, our experiments began to be rewarded with a measure of success in evolving special methods and procedures to increase the well-being of the tribesmen. An example of this is the success achieved in opening up a network of roads in the Tirap Frontier Division, the headquarters of which were shifted to the interior of Khela-Khonsa from the Assam plain's town of Margherita only in August 1955. Prior to 1954, only one of these Sub-Divisions, Changlang, had been connected with a 24-mile long jeepable road. Since there were no other roads, food and other essential articles were supplied to Government servants and the Assam Rifles through drops from the air on the dropping zones among the hills near the Administrative Centres.

The work of building roads in the hills is a difficult one, apart from the heavy costs involved. A good road with proper bridges and capable of sustaining, say 3-ton traffic, may, in a difficult terrain, cost as much as Rs. 3 lakhs per mile. Obviously, it would have taken many years if the programme of road-construction had been fashioned according to normal standards for laying out roads with the normal minimum width of 16 feet, gradients flatter than 1 in 15, and tarred. We could not also take advantage of the system recognized in the C.P.W.D. Code and employed contractors as, besides other

considerations, this would have necessitated the importation of a large number of labour from outside NEFA. We knew that the Noctes and the Wanchos—two of the major tribes living in Tirap Frontier Division—built 'Morungs', large buildings which are centres of the life of the men-folk. These 'Morungs' are places where the youth of the tribe are trained and disciplined and are given lessons of public service. If, therefore, we could succeed in canalizing the enthusiasm of the people to road work and could content ourselves, to begin with, with fair-weather jeepable tracks, we reckoned that we would have made a good start. What was important, of course, was to align the tracks properly so that in course of time they could be widened, improved and the more important ones even converted into proper motorable roads.

It was decided, therefore, that a contractor would be entrusted only with such difficult tasks as that of blasting hard rocks requiring use of explosives; 'hump removal', metalling and bridge-making, requiring the use of skilled labour. The contractor would bring in only the necessary number of road-workers from outside and the major-task of cutting of road would be done by the inhabitants of the region themselves. Even this presupposed the setting up of a complicated organization to ensure payment of daily wages, to give medical help and to provide such essential articles as salt. It also envisaged the working of the contractor and his labour side by side with the Political Officer (as the Public Works Disbursing Officer) and the local labour—each carrying out his respective task. Such an organization was set up in December 1956 and put to its test for the first time to complete the remainder of the ninteen-and-a-half miles of road, which would connect Margherita with the Divisional Headquarters through Changlang. As a result of the combined efforts of the Government officials belonging to all the departments, under the technical guidance of the engineers and the overall leadership of the Political Officer, the work was taken up on the 15th of December, 1956, and completed on the 10th of March, 1957, on which date the first jeep reached the Divisional Headquarters.

Such a task was regarded as almost impossible of achievement by experts who knew something about road-construction in the hills. The tribal people were proud of their

achievement, and the Government officials were keen to mobilise their enthusiasm into building yet another road. Unfortunately, not only was there need to call a brief halt—new plans and estimates had to be worked out and sanctions obtained—but there was the Assam monsoon to cope with, and nothing much could be done in the way of construction until the coming of the cold weather.

It was realized that it would be virtually impossible to put up the required buildings for housing the Divisional Headquarters in the interior at Khonsa until an adequate supply of sand, cement, CGI sheets and timber could be moved to the site over a surface route. The preliminary task of planning was completed in the off-season and this time the target was to build a 20-mile long road to connect the Divisional Headquarters with Dilli in the plains, almost next-door to the railway station at Namrup.

Some 2,000 people belonging to all the tribes of the Division responded to the call by the first week of October. The 20 miles' alignment was divided into sectors and sub-sectors. Medical-aid posts were set up and camps opened for workers from each village, who took the responsibility of constructing a certain length of the road according to their numerical strength and capacity to work. The people had not known to use pick-axes, shovels and *kodalies*. Soon, however, a number of them became adept in handling them. A spirit of healthy competition ensued, and often it needed a lot of persuasion before the local workers would agree to the summoning of the contractor to use his labour and explosives to blast a rock, which had defied them. They refused to acknowledge defeat until the task proved completely beyond them—and this was not very often.

Simultaneously work was progressing on the Khela-Khonsa access road covering a distance of seven-and-a-half miles. At one stage, there were actually 4,000 people working on both the sectors, including about 3,400 belonging to the Division itself and some 600 workers who had been brought by the contractor from outside and distributed over the entire length to take up the more complicated tasks here and there as might be necessary. The 20 miles of the Dilli-Khonsa road were

actually completed in exactly two months and the seven-and-a-half miles of the Khela-Khonsa road were also simultaneously completed in 32 days. The amount of work required to be done can be judged from the following:

In the construction of Dilli-Khonsa road, a total of 45.10 lakh cubic feet of ordinary earth and earth mixed with boulders had to be excavated and 21.65 lakh cubic feet of soft and hard rock cut or blasted. The corresponding quantities for Khela-Khonsa road were 20 lakh cubic feet and 1.92 lakh cubic feet, respectively. In addition to hill cutting, 100 acres of jungle were cleared, involving cutting of bamboo and cane clumps and trees of girth ranging up to 30 feet.

There were, of course, ups and downs. There was, for example, an enormous solid hard rock, 11 miles from Khonsa and 17 miles from Deomali, which jutted out between the spurs of two hills. The workers had to slide down on their bottoms about 300 feet during the cutting operations in order to get to the other side. Some time back, an unwary mithun had lost its balance, had fallen off and got killed. The people concluded that such a mishap could have occurred only because the place was haunted by an evil spirit residing in this high rock, and they had been keeping away from it. They called it "Elephant Rock" because of its huge size and formation, looking rather like the back of an enormous elephant. It was with considerable difficulty, therefore, that they were persuaded to take up the work of cutting it. I was informed that many wept as they worked and that is how the place was re-christened the "Weeping Corner".

This reminds me of a report I received during the course of my recent tour of Lohit Frontier Division of NEFA and which was causing quite a lot of consternation at the time. It confirmed my belief regarding the powerful hold which the concept of Evil Spirits has on the tribal mind. Years ago, the village of Yakung near Wallong, up in the north-east, was deserted by its inhabitants, the Lamas, because of a dreaded epidemic which had resulted in several deaths. The epidemic was believed to have been caused by the wrath of a particularly dreaded Evil Spirit. The land there is very fertile and the earlier inhabitants had even left terraced fields and a depend-

able water-point behind them. But all attempts made until recently could not persuade anyone to settle down on the old side of this village. The new Political Officer, during his recent Lohit Valley tour, however, succeeded and the Mishmis decided to take up their abode there. When I was in Tezu, the headquarters of the Division, a report came over the wireless that the leader of the Mishmis had been seriously taken ill. We got worried about him, for we felt that if he should die, the efforts of the Political Officer would have proved in vain, as the people would attribute the death to the same Evil Spirit and almost certainly desert Yakung again.

Then, again, somewhere near the 14th mile-stone from Khonsa, a tree was being felled and it came down a little before the tribal sawyers had expected. As a result, three of the workers were badly injured and it seemed as though they would die. But, thanks to our doctors, they lived. It was hard work convincing the people that this was in the nature of an accident and in any case the Evil Spirit had been propitiated as otherwise the injured would not have survived.

There were half a dozen occasions when the people, new to the task, lost sight of the pegs, which the overseers had stuck in the ground to indicate the alignment, and went off the mark. Such mistakes had to be set right.

The situation had its comic interludes also. The wild elephants, which abound in the area, often played their little tricks. Fortunately, nothing very serious happened and the "worst" story I heard in this line was that of an obstinate baby elephant, which refused to budge from the road and give the right of way to the Government jeep carrying the Assistant Engineer. A good deal of hooting the horn had, therefore, to be done. The baby elephant panicked and started screeming. The mother elephant responded to the call and in a fit of anger attacked and damaged the jeep, though nobody was injured.

Some people, who had come to work from two of the remotest villages on the Burma border, were used to only very narrow foot-paths and had never seen a vehicle before. When they saw a jeep track being cut, they offered the surmise that some human beings, infinitely taller and broader than them-

selves, were expected to go that way and hence the need for a wider track. When at last they saw the first jeep working its way up the road, they ran helter skelter up the hill. It took quite some time to convince them that they were in no danger and could return to their huts. People also came to build the road from a village which had made itself known by the cold-blooded murder of Captain Holcombe and his party long ago.

This is the story of only a part of the programme of road building in Tirap Frontier Division. Much more has been achieved since and it is now no longer necessary to provide supplies to most, if not all, of the outposts of this Division by air. This is no small achievement.

In conclusion I would like to point out that a road can be a double-edged tool. On the one hand, it makes the task of the Administration easier, and the amenities and good things of civilization can be carried much more easily to the hitherto cut off interior. On the other, it makes it easier for the money-lenders and others to exploit the people. Girls may be lured away from their homes. A good deal of money amounting to several lakhs of rupees is going into the hands of the people as their earnings for work done on roads. It would be only too easy for them to squander it on trinkets, cigarettes and alcoholic drinks.

The Administration is alive to these dangers. Steps were therefore taken simultaneously to start co-operatives and several shops are already doing good business through investments made by the local people themselves. One such shop at Changlang caters for the day-to-day requirements of the consumer and sells rice, atta and such utilitarian articles as lanterns, torches, hoes, yarn and cooking utensils. A few of the comparatively well-to-do people want to enjoy the luxury of such modern conveniences as the tractor and the jeep. Just as there is a move from an indigenous Tribal Co-operative Society in Pasighat in the Siang Frontier Division to purchase a tractor, the Ang of Borduria is hoping to utilise some of his road earnings in purchasing a jeep. And his people are looking forward to the day when their Chief will be able to ride in a jeep of his own.

DIETARIES OF PRIMITIVE TRIBES

P. N. Sen Gupta

Men are said to be omnivorous. Among primitive tribes, however, it is possible to distinguish some that are herbivorous and live on agriculture in the same country where the other people are carnivorous, chase-loving and nomadic. Whatever be the cause of this difference, the aboriginals have generally well-developed bodies and their strength and endurance are superior to those of the civilised people. When the dietaries of more important tribes are carefully studied, it is found that these are complete and in many respects more nutritious than the nutritive qualities of the diets of many of the civilised peoples of the world.

The effect of the dietary habits on the growth, physique and health of the primitive tribes can only be judged by proper scientific assessments. But such scientific investigations have not been carried out so far and whatever information is available is insufficient and incomplete.

Studies in anthropology undertaken in India and other parts of the world reveal several important facts about the dietary habits of the aboriginal people, but the actual intake of calories, proteins, minerals and vitamins by them is not known, thereby making a comparative study of their habits difficult. Nevertheless, the data disclosed provide valuable information regarding the wide variation in the diets of primitive peoples.

Of all the primitive tribes of the world, the Eskimos are prevailingly carnivorous, living mainly on marine animals—the seal, polar bear, white whale, arctic hare and eggs of arctic birds. According to the present knowledge of nutrition requirements based on physiological needs, their diet is not complete and lacks starchy food. But the Eskimos are strong and vigorous possessing enormous energy. The Ainus of the Japanese island, Yezo, are also carnivorous. They are hunters and eat the flesh of fox, wolf, horse and fowl, and do some

fishing. They also depend on a few vegetables, herbs and edible roots. On the other hand, the Hunzas of the upper valleys of Karakoram live entirely on fruit and agricultural produce and yet possess better endurance and superior physical strength. Their diet, however, is rich and nutritive, consisting of wheat, barley, millets, pulses, beans, potatoes, green vegetables, fruits like apricots and mulberries, milk, ghee (clarified butter) and butter-milk. Occasionally, they take meat and drink home-made wine of good grapes. In the words of Sir Robert McCarrison, formerly Director of the Nutrition Research Laboratories, Coonoor, "these people are unsurpassed by the Indian race in perfection of physique; they are long-lived, vigorous in youth and age, capable of great endurance and enjoy a remarkable freedom from disease in general. Their diets are the unsophisticated foods of nature and the healthiest diets of mankind."

The Bakitara tribe living in Banyoro, North-West of Victoria Nyanza, and the Todas of the Nilgiri Hills of India are prevailingly lacto-vegetarian. In the environs of Victoria Nyanza—the great cattle country of Africa—the population is lactivorous, taking cow's milk twice a day and some plants. The food of the Todas consists mainly of milk, ghee, butter-milk, curd, some cereal grains, sugar, herbs and fruits. In the old times they lived only on herbs, fruits, honey and milk products.

From the above description, it appears that there is no uniformity in the type of food taken by the different tribes; but there is some relation in the type of food consumed by them and the climatic conditions of their environments. Herbivorous tribes appear to be the most numerous, the carnivorous and the omnivorous coming next and the lactivorous last. But in the absence of any systematic investigations and availability of complete data, it is possible to know only the variations in the actual consumption of the food groups and not the actual intake of calories, proteins, mineral matters like calcium, phosphorus and iron and of the five important vitamins.

For the first time, the Department of Anthropology of the Union Government has undertaken extensive systematic

investigations on the dietaries, nutrition and adequacy of food, the general cause of various ailments, the birth and death rates, the expectation of life, the rate of growth among children, basal metabolism, etc., among the primitive tribes of India. The aim of these studies is to evaluate the effect of the dietary habits on the constitution of the aboriginal tribes. The investigations were first started in the Abor Hills on the North-East Frontier of India and considerable amount of work was done during the successive years among the different sections of Abors and Galongs. These investigations were extended to the Uralis and Kanikkars in the Travancore Hills.

The Abors of Assam State, on the North-East Frontier, inhabit that part of the State which has a common boundary with Tibet and China. They settle in villages at a distance of 10 to 15 miles apart, and practise the shifting or *jhum* method of cultivation, raising cereals, millets and some vegetables including a green leafy one called *pattu* (mustard leaf —*Brassica sp.*). Besides, leaves of many wild plants are also taken by them in large quantities. *Kachu* (*Colocasia antiquorum* and *arwi* in Hindi), yams, pumpkins, brinjals, green chillies, ginger, onion and stems and flowers of some wild plantain trees are used as vegetables. For their meat supply the Abors rear pigs and chickens and also hunt and fish. The surplus meat is partially dried and preserved for future consumption.

Generally animals such as deer, wild boar, squirrels and wild cats are hunted for food, and birds and field rats are caught in traps. Where there is a river nearby, the fish are caught by laying traps and poisoning the water. Chickens are quite frequently eaten by the Abors and on special occasions pigs are slaughtered. Many well-to-do families own a semi-domesticated animal, *mithan* (*Bosfrontalis*), which is locally called *Esso*. This animal is sacrificed on social and religious occasions for the supply of meat and finds a ready market and is often bartered for cereal grains or other vegetables. At marriages it is given as bride price. Chickens' eggs are not generally eaten but are preserved for worshipping. Rice is the staple food in the lower regions of the hills

and grains such as *annyat* (*Coix Lachryma*) and millets are the staple food in the higher regions.

The diet of the Abors is very simple. It consists of a boiled cereal and some boiled green leaves or fish or meat. A mixture of green leaves and meat, seasoned with ground chillies and salt is another popular dish with the Abors. After three or four persons have taken their food together, they drink *Apong* which is a slightly fermented beverage. The cooking method followed by the Abors is simple. The grains are not washed before cooking and after cooking the water in which they are boiled is not thrown away. The cooking is done on a slow fire and the cover of the pot is tightened with a leaf. This process retains the maximum nutritive value of rice and other cereals—mainly vitamin B. The Abors do not know the use of milk as food nor do they make use of any oil for cooking. Sugar and jaggery are not available to them. The average daily intake of different food groups among the Abors is given in Table I.

TABLE I

	(in ounces
Rice	26·4
Other cereals	0·3
Millets	0·5
Green leafy vegetables	1·8
Other vegetables	1·4
Flesh foods	1·4
Fruits	0·6
Apong (pints)	0·9

Nutritive principles provided by such dietary composition are given in Table II.

TABLE II

Calories	2,962
Protein (gm.)	82
Fat (gm.)	17·3
Carbohydrate (gm.)	624
Calcium (gm.)	1·0
Phosphorus (gm.)	3·1
Iron (mgm.)	20
Vitamin A (I.U.)	4,103
Thiamine (mg.)	1·5
Riboflavin (mg.)	0·3
Niacin (mg.)	35·4
Vitamin C (mg.)	66

Native beverage—Apong

This native drink is prepared by slightly fermenting *mirung* (*ragi, Eleusine coracana*) or a mixture of *mirung* and rice and then extracting it first with hot and then with cold water. This drink is quite nutritious and contains protein, mineral matters and vitamins and, like beer, very little alcohol. After some samples of *Apong* were analysed in the laboratory, the average nutritive values per 100 cc. (3.5 ounces) were found to be as given in Table III.

TABLE III

Calories 59; Protein 0.9%; Carbohydrate 8.3%
Calcium 15.2 mg.%; Phosphorus 68.3 mg.%; Iron 1.15 mg.%
Thiamine 2.5 mcg. %; Niacin 0.6 mg.%; Alcohol 5.2%

The consumption of *Apong* on the basis of 0.9 pint per individual per day provides food value as given in Table IV.

TABLE IV

Calories	295	Phosphorus (mg.) ..	341·5
Protein (gm.)	4·5	Thiamine (mcg.) ..	12·5
Carbohydrate (gm.) ..	41·5	Iron (mg.)	5·8
Calcium (gm.) ..	52·5	Niacin (mg.)	3·0

It is evident from these figures that *Apong* enriches the nutritive value of the Abor diet by approximately 10 per cent of calories, 5.5 per cent of protein, 5.3 per cent of calcium, 11 per cent of phosphorous, 29 per cent of iron and 8 per cent of niacin. Generally *Apong* is consumed more by the males, but since it is not so harmful it is freely taken by both the sexes in place of water. It also has a social and religious value as it is taken during folk dances, village meetings and ceremonial festivals.

The Uralis of Travancore Hills

The diet of the Urali and Kanikkar tribes of Travancore Hills is comparatively very inadequate. They have settled in the villages within the forest areas of the former Travancore State. They come out of these areas, although not very frequently, to buy some necessities from the adjoining markets. Rice, pulse (red gram) and sweet potatoes are the crops they raise. They also grow tapioca trees and vegetables like green

papya, green plantains, brinjals, pumpkins, bitter gourd, yams, *colocasia* and small quantities of green leafy vegetables. They do not rear pigs or chickens and live mainly on tapioca, small quantities of rice, some wild roots and yams. Meat, fish, milk and milk products do not form part of their diet. At times some of the families do use cocoanut oil for cooking but generally they just boil their food-stuffs and roast some of the vegetables. Raw tapioca is rich in riboflavin and vitamin C but after boiling it twice they throw away the boiled water. According to them, the double boiling removes the poisonous materials present in tapioca. They have no fermented or intoxicating native beverage.

The composition of the Urali diet per head per boy as revealed by the dietary surveys is given in Table V.

TABLE V

	In ounces
Rice	7·1
Tapioca	21·4
Pulse	1·1
Green leafy vegetables	0·04
Other vegetables (mainly yams and wild roots)	16·9
Oils	0·2
Fruits	0·5

The nutritive principles that the Uralis receive from their dietary composition are given in Table VI.

TABLE VI

Calories	2,228
Protein (gm.)	36·7
Fat (gm.)	6·1
Carbohydrate (gm.)	498
Calcium (gm.)	0·3
Phosphorus (gm.)	6·8
Iron (mgm.)	11·6
Vitamin A (I.U.)	265
Thiamine (mgm.)	1·6
Riboflavin (mgm.)	0·5
Niacin (mgm.)	15·1
Vitamin C (mgm.)	27·6

Abor and Urali Diets vis-a-vis *Average Indian Diets*

In Tables VII and VIII are shown the average quantities of food consumed by the Abors, Uralis and non-tribal Indians and the nutritive value of their foods. The figures for the latter have been taken from the results of the dietary surveys carried out in the States of Bombay, Delhi, Punjab, Madras,

Assam and West Bengal. Again, to determine the deficiencies or otherwise of these foods, the figures for the balanced diet recommended by the Nutrition Advisory Committee of the Indian Council of Medical Research are also given.

TABLE VII

Average daily intake of various food groups, in ounces

	Consumers			
	Non-tribal Indians	Abors	Uralis	Recommended for non-tribal Indians
Rice	16·6	26·4	7·1	14·0 (cereals)
Other cereals	—	0·3	21·4 (tapioca)	—
Millets and pulses	2·3	0·5	1·1 (pulse)	3·0
Green leafy vegetables	0·9	1·8	0·4	4·0
Other vegetables	4·1	1·4	16·9	6·0
Flesh foods	0·9	1·4	nil	4·0
Fats, Oils	0·9	nil	0·2	2·0
Milk, etc.	3·3	nil	nil	10·0
Fruits	0·6	0·6	0·5	3·0
Sugar Jaggery	0·7	nil	nil	2·0
Drink pints	—	0·9	nil	..

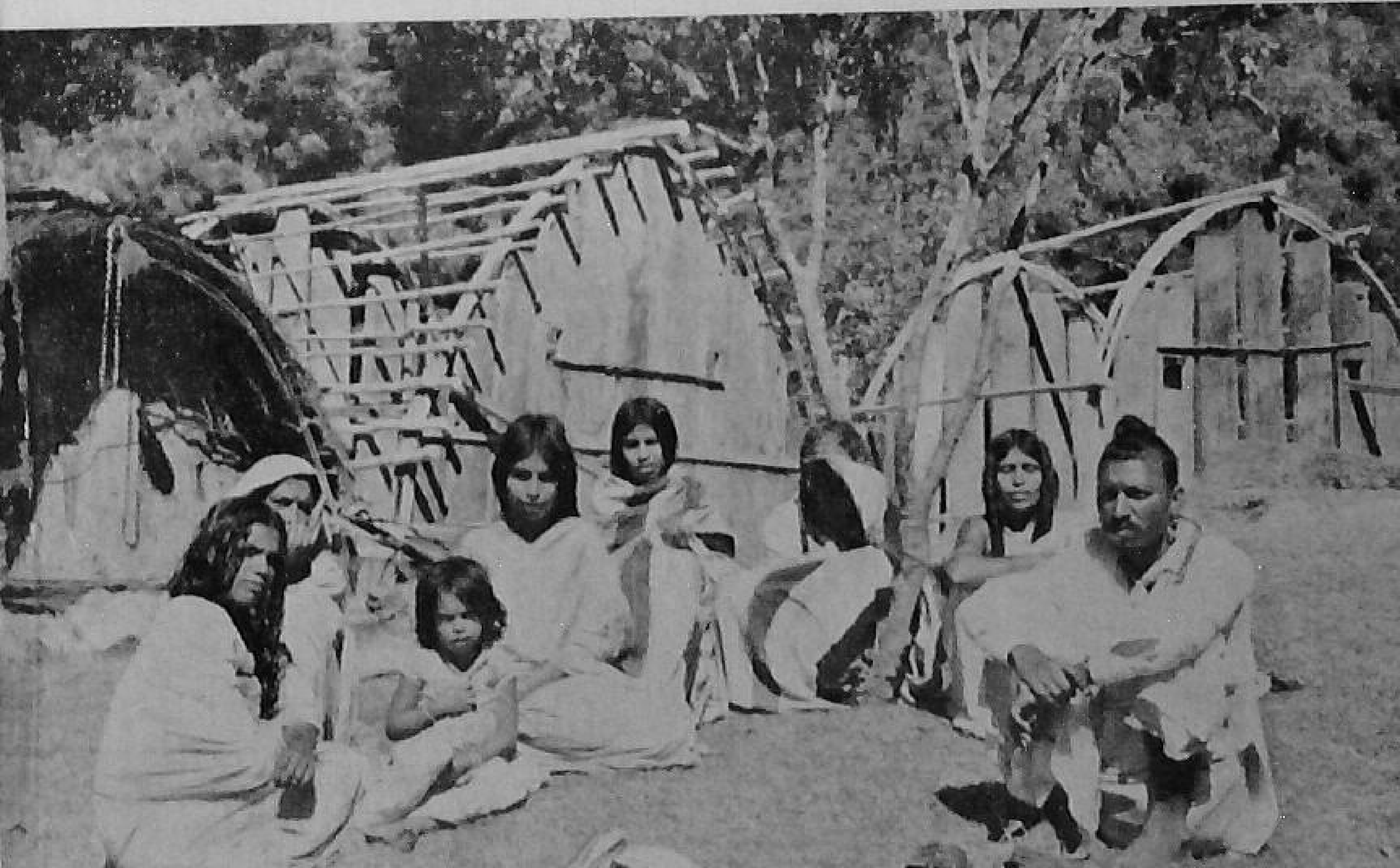
TABLE VIII

Nutritive value of the food consumed per day

	Non-tribal Indians	Abors	Uralis	Recommended for non-tribal Indians
Calories	2,550	2,962	2,228	3,000
Protein (gm.)	72·1	84·7	36·7	82
Fat (gm.)	24·7	17·3	6·1	..
Carbohydrate (gm.)	498	624	498	..
Calcium (gm.)	0·6	1·0	0·3	1·0
Phosphorus (gm.)	1·9	3·1	6·8	1·5
Iron (mgm.)	26·5	30·8	11·6	20
Vitamin A (I.U.)	3,020	4,103	265	3,000-4,000
Thiamine (mgm.)	1·9	1·5	1·6	1·5
Riboflavin (mgm.)	—	0·3	0·5	1·8
Niacin (mgm.)	—	35·4	15·1	15
Vitamin C (mgm.).	44·5	66·0	27·6	50

Tribal marriage

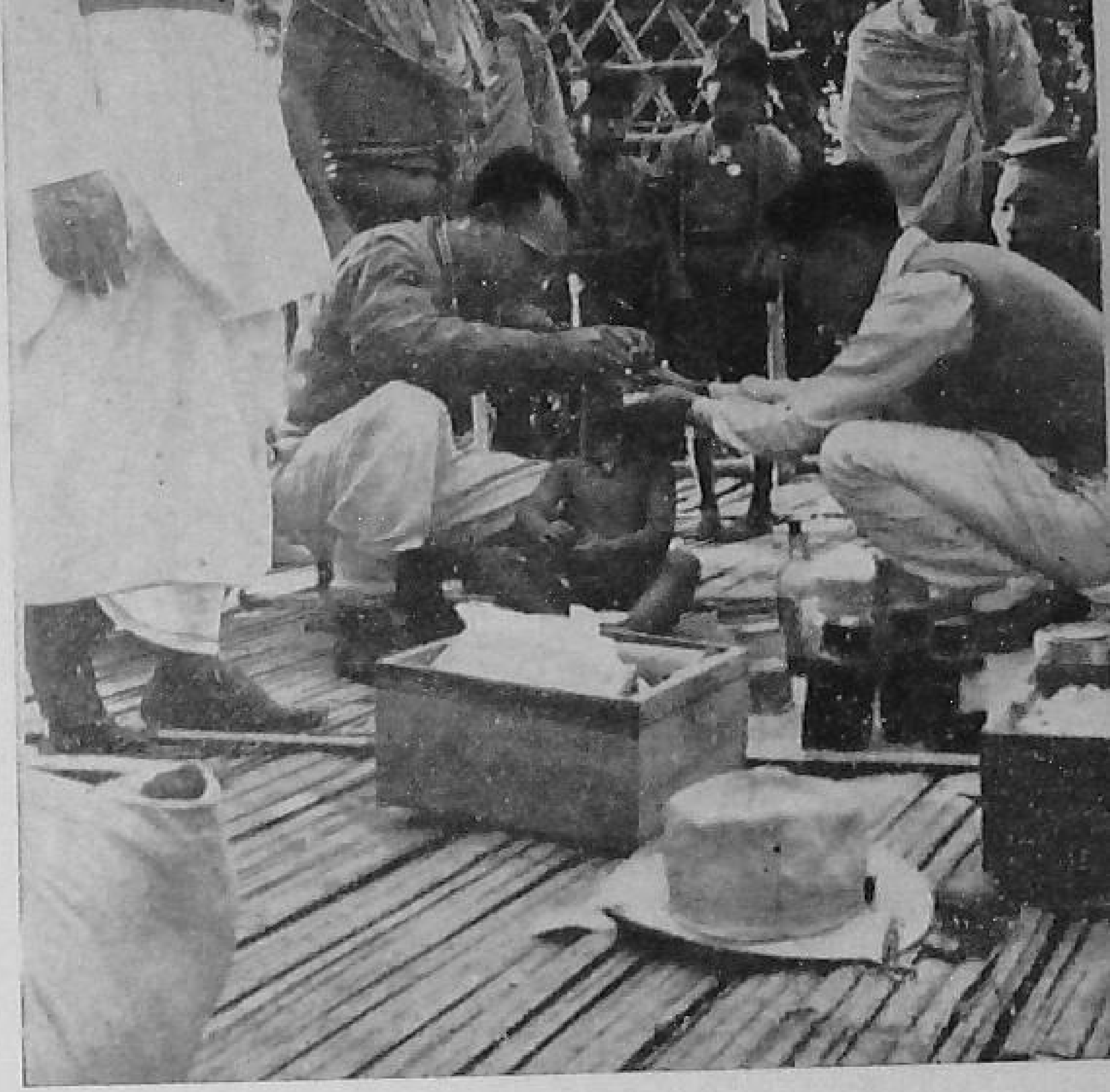
Todas of the Nilgiris



Paniyan mother and child

Dandari (Gond) dancers of Hyderabad

Doctor at work in the Tirap Frontier Division



Tribal children at drill in a Government school

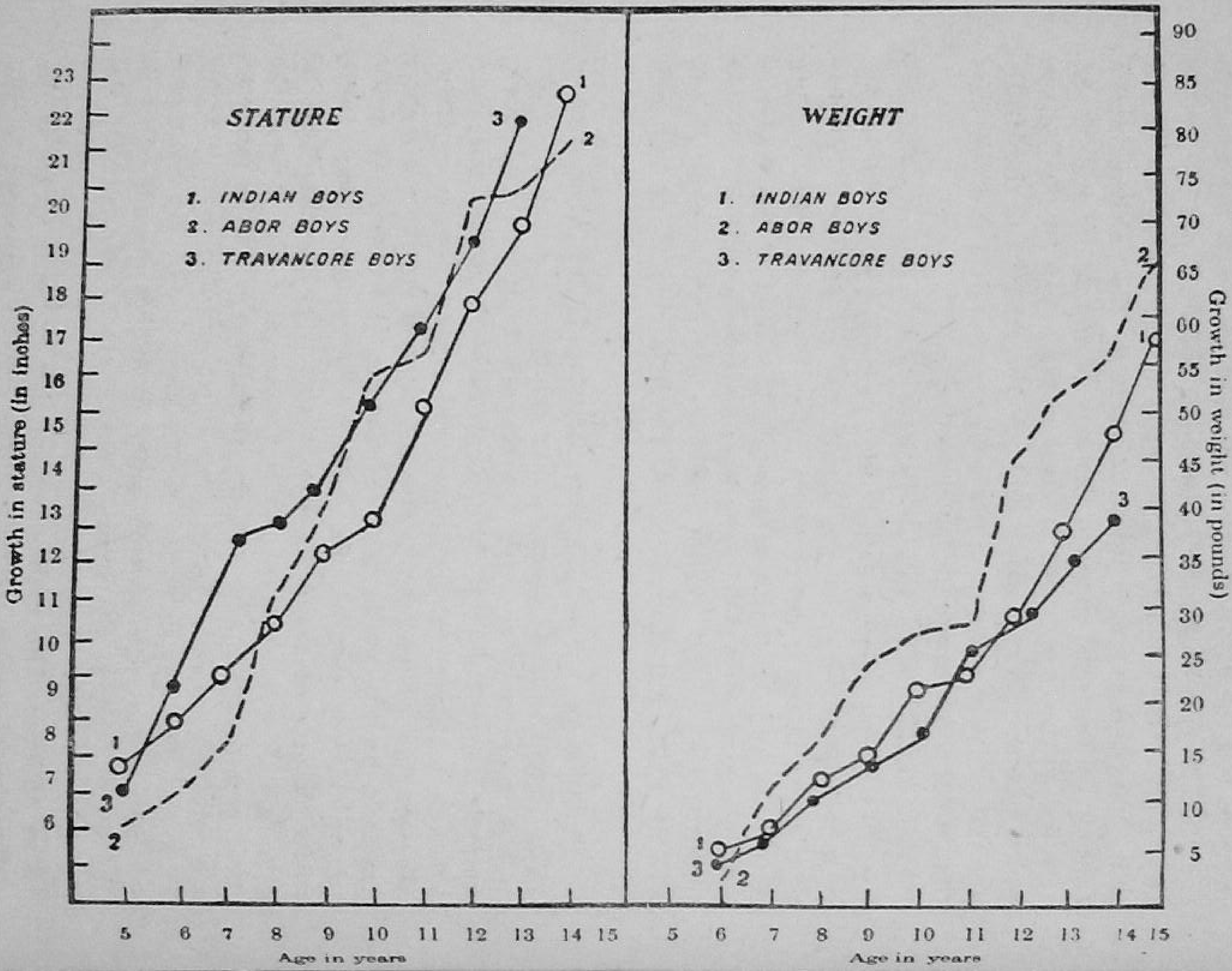
Girls from Basic School in tribal area bathing children

These tables show that the Abors receive 16 per cent more calories and the Urali about 9 per cent less than the average Indian. The consumption of protein is about 17 per cent more among the Abors and about 67 per cent less among the Uralis than what the average Indian is getting. The calcium intake is about 70 per cent more in the case of the Abors and 50 per cent less in the case of the Uralis than the intake by the Indians of the plains. As regards vitamin A, the Abors and the Uralis are respectively getting 33 per cent more and 21 per cent less than what the average Indian is getting.

It is evident from the above figures that the Abor diet is superior to the average Indian diet in regard to all the important nutrients whereas the Urali diet is inferior. In other words, the latter is deficient, in calory content, body-building materials and in many vitamins. The diet of the Abors is superior to that of the Uralis because they consume sufficient quantities of cereal grains and vegetables, moderate quantities of meat, and drink *Apong* which is rich in protein and minerals.

In spite of the wholesome nature of the Abor diet, it suffers from several defects. For instance, the calory intake is not in accordance with the climate, body-size and work; animal protein of high biological value is inadequate; also through the practice of smoking and drying meat, a considerable amount of useful protein is lost; and calcium is mainly supplied by the green leafy vegetables, the maximum value of which may not be absorbed in the system. One of the many defects of the Abor diet is shown by the incidence of endemic goitre found in all the villages of the Abor Hills both among the males and the females. In the Padam and the Minyong areas of the Abor Hills respectively 51.2 per cent and 36.0 per cent of the families or 13.1 per cent and 9.8 per cent of the persons suffer from this disease. But in the Pangi village of Sibum, more than 75 per cent of the families or more than 35 per cent of the people were found to be affected. The main cause of this endemic goitre is the deficiency of iodine which perhaps can be explained by the distance of this area from the sea. But other possible causes of this disease cannot altogether be overruled. These are:

Comparative growth in stature and weight of non-tribal Indian, Abor and Travancore boys from the age of 5 to 15



the ingestion of goitrogenic substances through *pattu* (*Brassica sp.*) and infection caused by the drinking of contaminated water. Elaborate investigations are, however, being carried out in the laboratories to determine the iodine content in the food, soil and water of the tribal areas and to determine how far *pattu* is responsible for this disease and which other leafy vegetable can substitute it. There is no goitre among the Uralis and Kanikkars of Travancore.

Comparative growth of children

The real criterion of the nutritional value of a diet is its effect on the rate of growth of children. A comparative study of the growth of Abor, Urali and non-tribal Indian boys of the age-groups of 5 to 15 has, therefore, been made to show the effects of their diets on their growth in weight and in stature. The chart on page 94 shows that while the growth in stature of all these boys is almost the same, the growth in weight of the Abor boys is the highest and that of the Travancore boys the lowest, thus truly reflecting the nutritional defects of their dietaries. The rate of growth of an Abor boy, in weight, is about eight pounds higher and that of the Urali boy about 12 pounds lower than that of the non-tribal Indian boy.

SOCIAL ORGANISATION

Tarak Chandra Das

The Scheduled Tribes form a considerable section of the total population of India. According to the Census of 1951 they number 19.1 million. Out of every 1,000 Indians, 54 belong to the tribal community. They are more than one-third of the Scheduled Castes who contribute 51.3 million to the total population of India.

These 19.1 million tribal peoples are concentrated in a few regions of inaccessible hills and dense forests. History tells us that most of them once occupied the fertile river valleys and the extensive plains of India. At one stage more powerful peoples drove them away from their homes and they took shelter in their present habitat. Here they tried to preserve their culture and race, secure from the impact of the conquerors.

There are four important regions where the tribals are concentrated in large numbers in contiguous areas. The easternmost tribal concentration is found in Assam, Manipur and Tripura where they number 2.1 million. The Assam tribes are linked in the north with the tribes of West Bengal, particularly in the Districts of Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri. The three adjacent States of West Bengal, Bihar and Orissa have a connected area inhabited by 8.2 million tribals who possess the same racial and cultural features to a considerable extent. This area has the greatest concentration of tribals in the whole of India.

Further west we find another massing of tribal peoples in Madhya Pradesh with extensions in the former Vindhya Pradesh, Madhya Bharat and Hyderabad areas. In this area they number 4.3 million. The majority of these peoples also show similarity of race and culture.

The next important tribal area is Bombay which holds 3.4 million of them. Madras with 0.7 million tribals, scattered in small numbers over the entire State, does not form an

important area from the numerical point of view. Besides these four major areas, there are other pockets here and there which are often very interesting from the sociological standpoint but have less importance in the political or economic sphere.

The social organisation of the tribals of these different areas shows similarities as well as differences. It will not be possible to go into details in this short discussion, but we shall attempt to describe here a few aspects of the social organisation of the tribals of India.

Every society is constituted of two different elements, viz. *units* and *institutions*. Just as a modern skyscraper has a steel-frame of beams, ties, angles, etc., joined in different ways and by different means, similarly every human society has a steel-frame of different types of *units*, like those based on blood, locality, sex, age, etc. Each of these units consists of a number of persons depending on the basis of its constitution. Sometimes a unit may consist of thousands of persons, such as a clan of any of the tribes of Chota Nagpur and again it may hold only four or five persons as in the case of a nuclear family. These units of different types and magnitudes are interlinked in various ways and have their respective functions—the due discharge of which keeps the society going.

The other element of the social organisation, namely, institutions, is like mortar which fills up the intervening spaces between the framework and thereby gives the edifice its distinctive shape, character, ornamentation and beauty. The institutions are "established forms or conditions of procedure linked with group action". They are customs but "more massive and basic." The most important institutions are marriage, education, kinship, property, law and religion. There are many others of minor importance which give a distinctive character to the culture of a society. We shall now try to give some idea about some of these units and institutions.

Social Units

Social groupings based on blood are, perhaps, the most important social units. They are found in both primitive and advanced groups. Such groups are based on family,

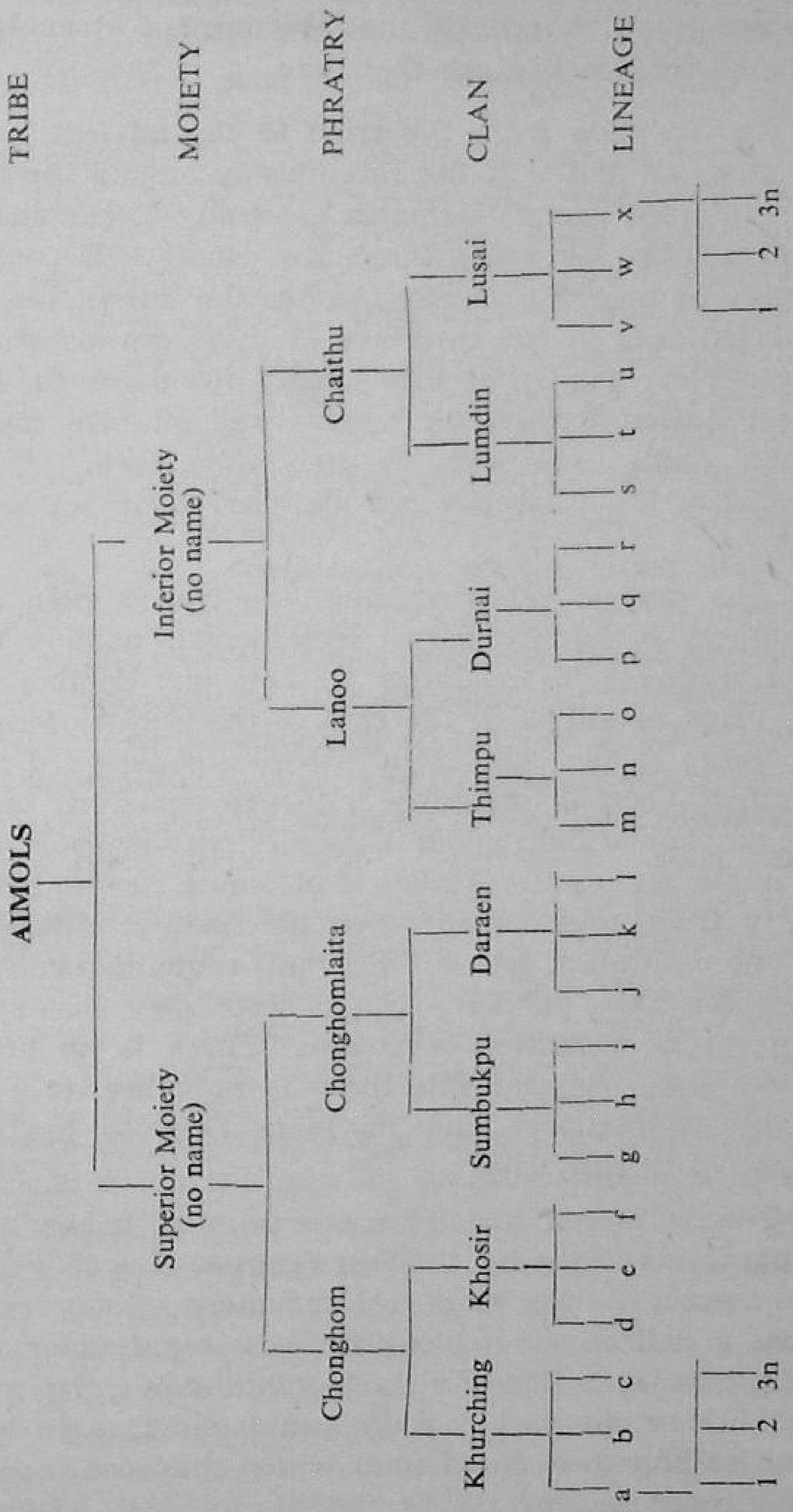
lineage, clan, phratry, moiety and tribe. Persons composing each one of these units generally regard themselves as the descendants of a common ancestor or ancestress, and claim that the same blood runs in their veins. The common ancestor or ancestress may be a very remote or a recent one, such as Ka Iawbei-tynrai (grandmother of the root) and Ka Iawbei-khynrai (young grandmother) of the Khasis of Assam. The former is the ancestress of the clan (kur) and the latter of the family (iing). In the case of the family or the lineage group, the ancestor or ancestress can easily be traced and spotted genealogically, but in the remaining cases, like those of the clan, phratry, moiety or tribe, it is not possible to fix the identity genealogically or historically. The ancestor or ancestress in each of the latter cases is a fictitious person whose actual existence at any period of time cannot in fact be established.

The relation and behaviour-pattern among the members of each of these groups depend considerably on the nature of the ancestor—whether actual or fictitious—and certain other factors. The duties and responsibilities of the members of a group towards one another vary according to the nearness of relationship. Let us consider some actual cases in this respect.

The Aimols are an insignificant old Kuki tribe of Manipur. The few villages, with the exception of one, which they inhabit are all situated on the hills to the east of Lake Logtak. They have a social organisation of an extremely symmetrical character which is shown in the chart on the next page.

The tribe, as shown in the chart on the next page, is divided into two moieties with no names. But they have a relative social position, *i.e.*, one is superior to the other. Each moiety is divided into two phratries and each phratry into two clans. The phratries and clans have their respective names in this tribe. Up to this point the division is symmetrical, each bigger unit being subdivided into two smaller units. But each clan is divided into more than two lineages and each lineage into more than two nuclear families. The lineages are marked in the chart by the letters of the alphabet—three in each case, just to indicate that the number

Social Organisation of the Aimol Kukis



is more than two. The nuclear families are shown at the beginning and at the end with numerals. Here also three numerals are given to indicate that the number of nuclear families in each lineage is more than two.

As we pass from the tribe to the nuclear family, step by step, we find that the relationship among the members of the different groups becomes gradually closer and closer till we reach the last stage where it is closest. Depending on the degree of nearness of relationship the duties, responsibilities and attitudes of the members of these groups also vary. In the nuclear family of the Aimols, for example, the parents are required to support, protect and educate their children when young, who also, in their turn, love, respect, revere and obey their parents and maintain them when they grow old.

This mutual relation cannot be traced even among the members of the next bigger social group, namely, the lineage. The members of the latter do help one another but not to the same extent as in the case of the nuclear family. When we come to the clan, its members are expected to help one another when in difficulty but such occasions are rare and the amount of help given is usually not very substantial. For example, among the Aimols, a person is sure to receive hospitality from a clansman when he visits a village where he has no relation or friend. Previous acquaintance is not necessary for this purpose. Such hospitality is expected and enjoyed as a matter of course. There is no hesitation on either side. Beyond this there is no other duty or responsibility to discharge and no more help or facility can be expected in this tribe.

This, however, is not the case with all tribes. Among the tribes living in the North-West Frontier area of West Pakistan, the members of a clan feel far more closely related. The sense of collective responsibility is so highly developed among them that the action of a single member of a clan may embroil all its other members in a life and death struggle with another clan leading to a blood feud which may continue for years. But when we cross over the phratry and the moiety, we do not generally meet with such mutual duties and

responsibilities. The link there is based on the taboo of marital or sex relationship which these two units observe in common with the clan, lineage and family.

The individual in a society simultaneously belongs to each one of these groups which are based on blood. His affiliations to them come from one of his parents and we thus have two types of descent—patrilineal and matrilineal. Among the Khasis of Assam all social groupings based on blood are derived from the mother, whereas among the Nagas they all descend through the father. This affiliation of the individual either to his mother's or his father's folk is a crucial factor in social organisation, as it influences the passage of property and office from one generation to the other. In the matter of affiliation to these groups, the individual has no choice. The accident of birth determines this affiliation, *i.e.*, to which one of the various groups, based on blood, he belongs.*

Like blood, locality is another important factor contributing to the formation of social groupings. Both nomadic and settled peoples have groups based on it. The nomadic Andamanese of the Great Andaman had a grouping based on this factor which was socially the most important. Each tribe was divided into a number of 'local groups'. Each 'local group' consisted of about 30 to 50 persons of all ages, born in the same locality. The local group "was independent and autonomous, leading its own life and regulating its own affairs". It exercised ownership right over a territory which was, on an average, nearly 16 square miles. Within this territory the members of the 'local group' moved from place to place in search of roots, fruit, game, fish, etc. The intrusion into this territory by members of other similar groups was vehemently opposed and this often led to war. The 'local group' had its own political, social and economic functions. It regulated the life of each individual member in these respects. An individual born in a 'local group' was not tied down to it for ever. He could leave his 'local group' and join another, if the latter accepted him.

*For a detailed treatment of the social units based on blood, see author's articles "Social Organisation of the Tribal Peoples" in *The Indian Journal of Social Work*, Vol. XIV, No. 3, December 1953.

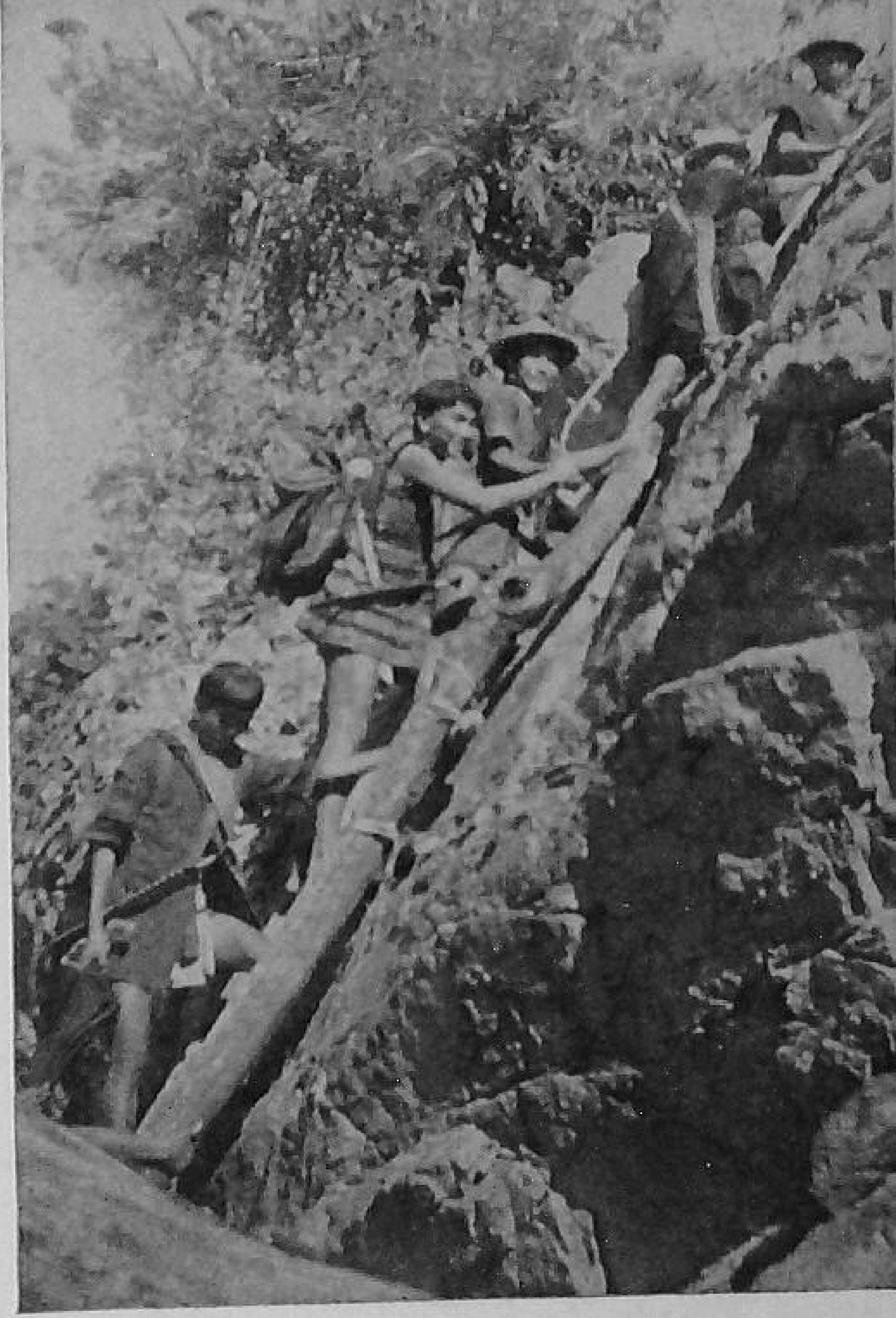
Among the settled tribes, the village is regarded as a very important social grouping based on locality. It has its political, social and economic life. In most of the settled tribes of India, political consciousness has not gone beyond the Village State. One does come across the idea of a federation of villages among the Munda, Oraon and Santal tribes of Chota Nagpur; but this idea is not fully developed.

The individual, as an inhabitant of a village, has certain duties and obligations towards society. Among the Purum Kukis of Manipur one is required to take part in the proceedings of the Village Council when it decides disputes and appoints village officials. A villager has also to pay for communal worship performed for the welfare of the entire village. During visits of important State officials to the village, each individual has to supply his quota of rice-beer for their entertainment. No work is done on *genna* days. Each individual helps to clear the village road when called upon to do so. When these tribes are free, each villager is required to take up arms in defence of his village against raids by neighbouring villages. These and similar other duties one has to discharge as a member of the village community.

The tribesman also enjoys certain privileges as a villager. These include the free utilisation of forest land for cultivation, freedom to collect fuel and building material from the surrounding jungles over which his village exercises some sort of right of ownership and the right to participate freely in the socio-religious festivals of the village.

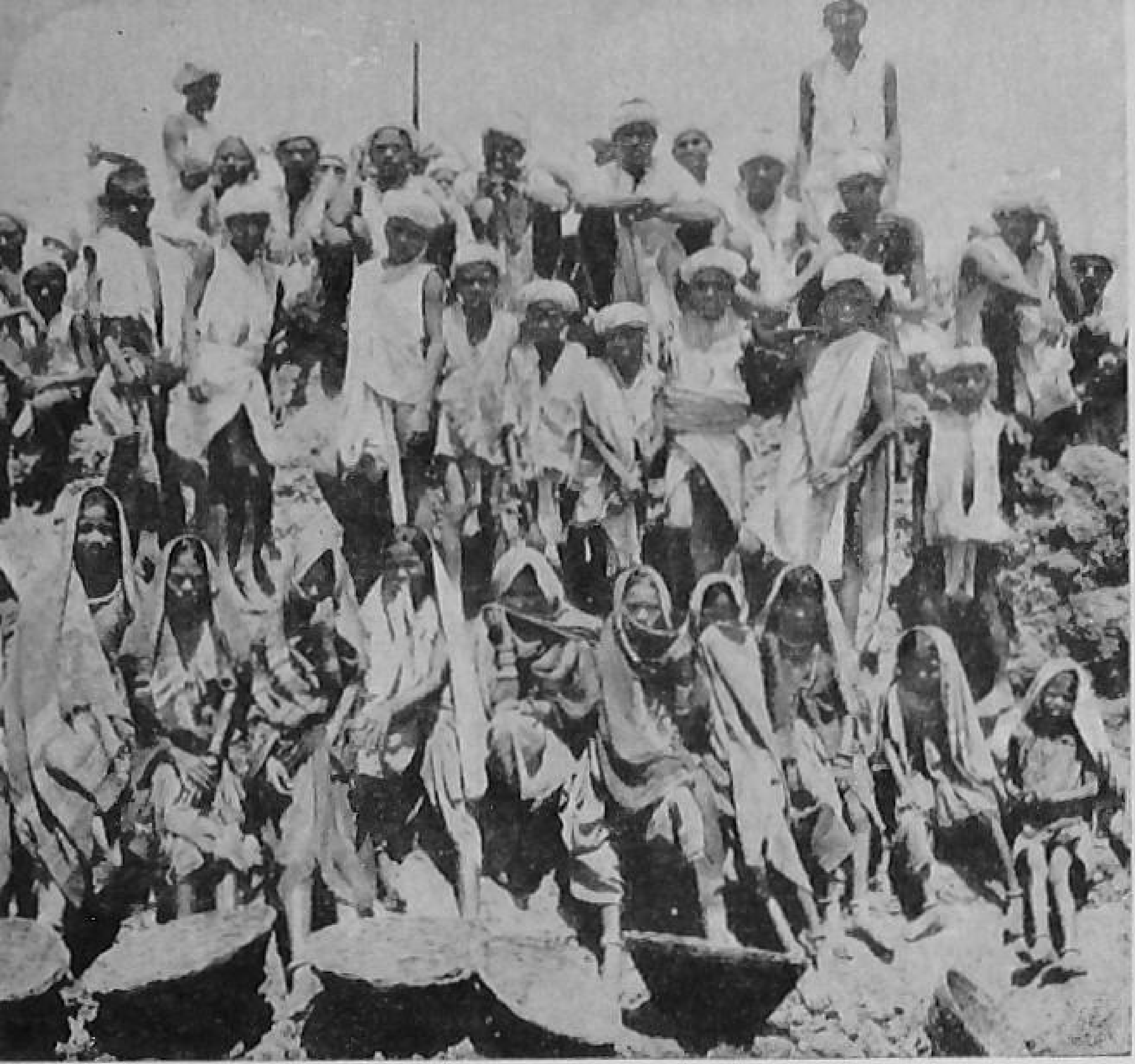
In this way the village with its inhabitants forms an active social unit, able to organise defence, solve disputes, decide ownership rights, etc. In an advanced society, besides the village, there are other bigger social groups which are based on locality, such as a sub-division, a district, a state, an empire, etc. An individual has duties and responsibilities as well as rights and privileges as a member of each one of these groups.

Social units based on sex are found both in pre-literate and advanced societies—more in the latter. The difference in the patterns of response between males and females has been established by Terman and Miles by their experiments



Porters climbing up a difficult track in the Lohit Frontier Division

Wooden bridge over the Passa river, 120-ft. long, built by community effort

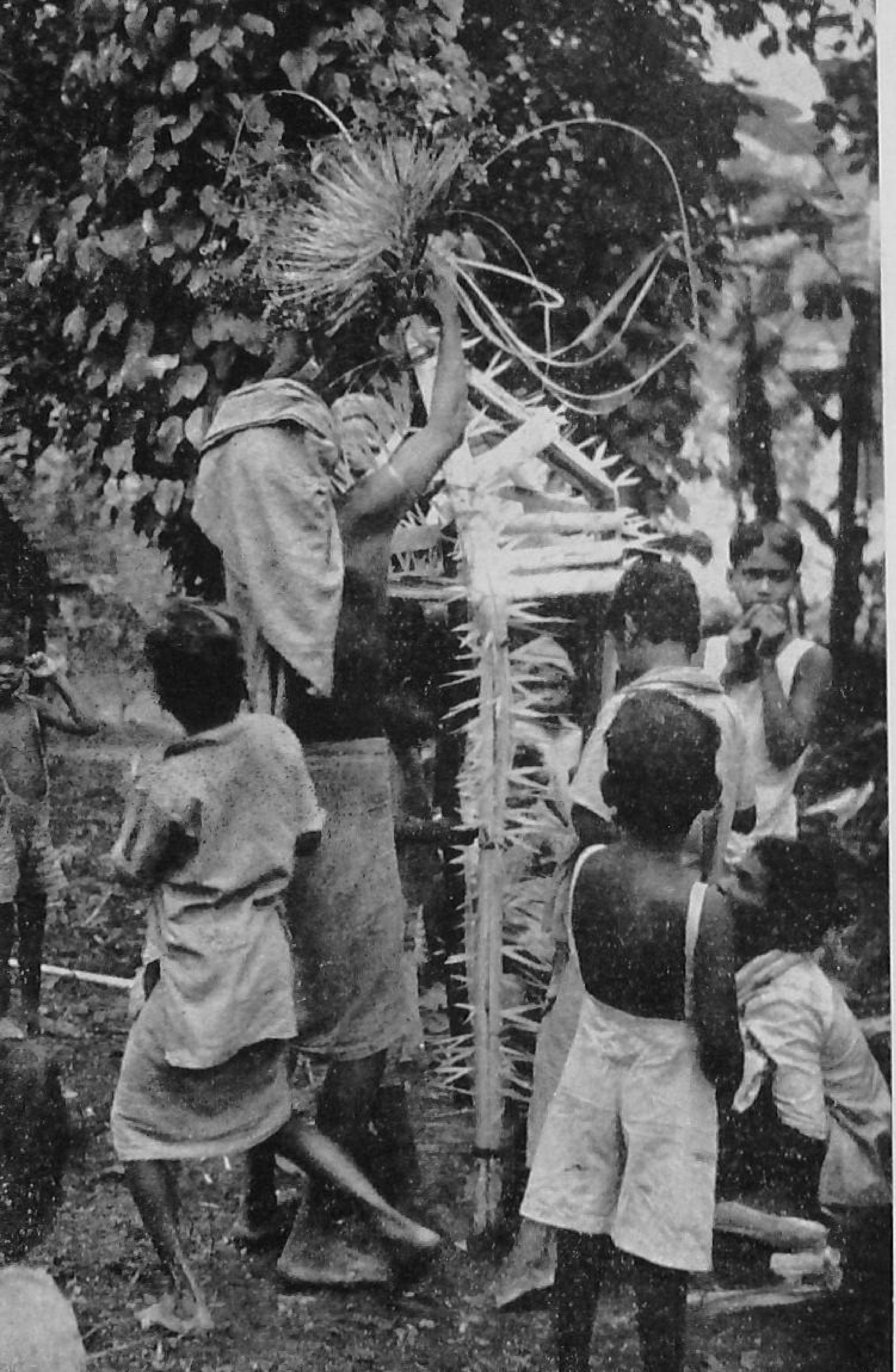


Voluntary labour for community development

Onge in outrigger canoes

Onge greeting

Tombstones of tribal leaders



Madam (*structure*) *being decorated for the deity*, Madan, *on the morning of* Pongalai (*votive offering*) *ceremony*

on hundreds of American men and women of different age and status. The two sexes differ in their 'interests'. "For example, females show a preference for indoor, artistic, decorative, and 'ministrative' activities, while males prefer those involving adventure, bodily risk, muscular strength and prolonged exertion." Some of these constitutional differences between the two sexes inevitably create different interests, and result in the formation of separate groups. Examples of sex fraternities among the tribal peoples of India are not very common. An instance of it is found in the Bachelors' House organisation of the Oraon and Naga tribes. Side by side we also meet with similar organisations of the spinsters in some of these tribes, though they are often weak imitations of the former. Life in these units is organised formally. The exit and entrance are controlled by rules. The Oraon bachelors of a village pass the night in a separate house meant for them; they participate jointly in ceremonial hunts, help the villagers on marriage occasions and other festivals, look after the comforts of the guests who are accommodated in the Bachelors' House, and so on. The unmarried grown-up girls of the village also pass the night in a separate house called *Pel-erpa* and are formally organised under a leader of their own. They are also required to help the villagers at the time of marriage and other social functions.

Among the Ao Nagas, before they were subjugated, young bachelors had to keep a constant watch over the village against sudden raids. They formed the standing army of the village and took the field against raiders at a moment's notice, long before the elders came to their aid. For the due discharge of this duty, custom forced them to sleep completely armed. Though the old order has changed and no more raids take place, Ao bachelors still keep watch day and night at two ends of the village and sleep fully armed.

In other parts of the world sex-groups are found in large numbers. The Australian aborigines isolate the males from the females at puberty rites. Secret societies among them are meant to keep the women under subordination. In the Banks Islands (Melanesia), all the males, after a certain age, live together in a separate house away from their wives and children. In some of these islands they do not even take

their meals at home. In advanced societies, on the other hand, female sororities have grown up in large numbers to defend women's rights. In spite of what has been stated above, groups based on sex are not actually formed round 'sex' as we usually understand the word but are constituted on secondary physical, psychological and cultural characteristics.

Age is another important factor influencing the formation of social units. Persons of the same age have certain similar physical and mental characteristics which differ from individuals who are appreciably older or younger. Every culture is aware of age-differences. Groups are formed on this basis either formally or informally. The relationship terminology records these groups by giving different terms for different generations. The passage from one age-group to another is often marked with ceremonials which van Gennep called the 'Rites of Passage'.

Among many pre-literate peoples the fundamental difference between boys, bachelors, and married men is formally recognised, such as among the Oraons of Ranchi. Intermediate groups based on age are also found among the tribal peoples. Among the Andamanese there are twenty-three age-grades with distinctive names. The Ao Nagas of Assam are divided into seven age-groups, each having a name and definite duties and privileges in the village organisation. Every three years a new group of boys of ages ranging from about 12 to 14, enters the 'morung' (bachelors' house). These are called *nozabarihori* (unripe gang). They must sleep in the 'morung' and work like slaves for the elder boys. In three years a new group takes their place and they become *tukapbahori* (ripening gang). They now make the newcomers work for them as hard as they worked. They need not sleep in the 'morung' if they do not want to, and marry towards the end of their period. Their duty is to carry messages and work in general for the village. After three years of this they become *chuchenbahori* (morung leaders' gang). They are now the leaders of the 'morung' and in ancient times used to go on head-hunting expeditions at this stage. After three years of this life they become *okchangshamicharibori* (pig's leg eaters) when they are given legs of

pigs killed for 'morung' feasts. Their duties during this period are the same as in the previous one. For the next three years they are *kidong mabang* (clan leaders). Now they are villagers of standing and have nothing to do with the 'morung'. After this they 'become *khonri* (load carriers) for three years when they supply men to carry sacrificial loads and receive a small share of the councillor's meat. At the end of this period they become *tatari* (councillors) for three years, and, with the advice of yet older groups run the village. They now get the biggest share of meat and administer the village in a body. Thus every Ao Male automatically comes to the helm of the village through this age-group system. Next they become *maozamba telakba* (assistant councillors) for three years and receive a small share of the councillor's meat. This stage is followed by that of the *maozamba temamba* from amongst whom a few become *patir* (priest). In this group the Ao Naga passes the rest of his life. The Ao age-group system appears to have reached perfection.

Among the Oraons of Ranchi District also we find a three-fold division of the bachelors into *puna jokhar* or novices, *majh-turia jokhar* or the intermediate group and *koha jokhar* or the oldest bachelors. The duration of membership in the first two groups is for three years each. In the last one the young man remains till he marries and settles down. Here also we find definite duties and privileges associated with each group. There is similar grouping among the other Indian tribes, too. In these age-groups there is a marked group consciousness. Individual members are always keen about group-honour, group-duty and group-life.

Besides these units based on blood, locality, sex and age, there are others which are based on factors like education, recreation, economic functions, religion and magic. We have not enough space to deal with them here, though it must be understood that in the conduct of the affairs of a society they are of no less importance. Let us now pause and see how the life of an individual is guided and controlled by the membership of these varied types of social units.

An individual is, at the same time, a member of a series of blood and other spatial groupings. He is simultaneously

a member of a sex-group and of an age-group. He also belongs to a series of educational groups, religious groups, recreational groups and economic groups. The human social organisation has reached such perfection that the individual does not find any difficulty, under ordinary circumstances, in discharging his duties as a member of all the units. There is no clash anywhere, and he is able to lead his life with ease and happiness. But when the individual is confronted with conflicting socio-psychological situations he finds the even tenor of his life disturbed. This results in maladjustment and brings misery to the individual and group-life. The tribals are now facing such a situation, and they are confronted with two clashing ideologies.

Social Institutions

Among the social institutions, marriage appears to be the most important one. It is practised almost universally by the tribal people, the only exception being the Hos of Kolhan. The extreme cupidity of the fathers of Kolhan brides and their high sense of family dignity have made them to demand an unusually high price for the hands of their daughters in marriage. Maidens aged 60 to 70 are a common sight in the Kolhan villages. Grown-up girls did not hesitate to criticise the conduct of their elders in this matter to the author. This situation became critical during the first two decades of the present century. As a result the young of both the sexes took the matter into their own hands and evolved a solution. They took advantage of the traditional method of marriage by capture. Young men and women began to arrange for their own unions without the knowledge of their parents and went through the operations of a mock capture of the bride. The father of the bride in such cases demanded a higher price but not with the hope of receiving any payment. This system of acquiring a mate has now become a common feature of Ho society. The old maladjustment, which had resulted in increasing the number of unmarried men and women, has thus been corrected.

The tribal peoples of India have more advanced views regarding the age of marriage of the young people than their advanced neighbours. The practice of adult marriage is

universal among them except in cases where they have come under the influence of Hindu culture. In Chota Nagpur the more well-to-do families of Santals, Mundas and Oraons have come into close contact with the Hindus. Among them the age of marriage for girls has come down to even 9 or 10 and for boys to 12 or 13. But among the Nagas and Kukis of Assam, girls marry between the ages of 15 and 20 and boys between the ages of 18 and 25. The groom is generally older than the bride in the tribal areas but the opposite is not unknown in Assam, *e.g.*, among the Purum Kukis.

There is considerable opportunity for the satisfaction of the sex impulses outside marriage among the tribals of India. Pre-marital sexual chastity is not very rigidly insisted upon in a large number of tribes. Among the Muria Gonds of Bastar, for example, according to Dr. Elwin, bachelors and maidens of a village pass the night in a common house where they pair off according to their choice. The mates are changed occasionally or regularly. This continues till they are married and leave the organisation. Marriage between the mates of the Ghotul (Bachelors' House) is very rare.[1] Half a century ago, each Oraon bachelor had a sweetheart in the spinsters' house. If a girl refused to accept a lover, she was 'cut' off by the older girls who refused to dance with her till she accepted a paramour. The Bachelors' House organisation has now gone underground and it is difficult to say what the present conditions are.[2] Among the Naga tribes also we find similar pre-nuptial laxity, *e.g.*, the Ao Nagas.[3] Post-marital laxity is also not unknown among the tribes of India. During the more important festivals, such as the Maghe Parab among the Hos and the Khaddi among the Oraons, men and women freely indulge in sex-relations. It may, therefore, safely be said that there is considerable opportunity for the satisfaction of sex-desires outside the marital tie among at least some of the tribals of India, yet we find that marriage is universal among them. It may hence be concluded that sex-activity is not the main objective of marriage. Economic co-operation, as found in the division of labour between husband and

1 Elwin—*The Murias and their Ghotul*, p. 333.

2 Rai Bahadur S. C. Roy—*The Oraons*, pp. 246—247.

3 Mills—*Ao Nagas*, p. 212.

wife, seems to be the basis for marital union among the tribals. We do not, at the same time, deny the existence of emotional inter-stimulation and procreation of children as motives for marriage, but they appear to be of minor importance.

The selection of mates is an important affair even in primitive society. The rules of endogamy, exogamy, hypergamy, preferential mating, and prohibited degrees operate simultaneously and thereby considerably restrict the freedom of choice. A Santal has to marry within his own tribe which is an endogamous body but he must not marry any one of his own clan which is an exogamous unit. Similarly, he also avoids marriage within his lineage and family as that would amount to incest which is extremely abhorrent to the tribal mind. Sometimes we find that marriage between cross-cousins is preferred. An extreme example of this is found among the Purum Kukis of Manipur among whom marriage is allowed only with the mother's brother's daughter and not even with the father's sister's daughter. In 1936 it was found that 75 per cent of the marriages of this tribe were of this type.[1]

Sometimes property considerations intervene and bring about anomalous marriages among some of the tribes. A Garo son-in-law (nokrom) has to remarry his widowed mother-in-law as she is the owner of the family property. This is a precautionary step to safeguard the future interest of the daughter (nokna) who will inherit her mother's property on the latter's death. If the widowed mother remarries another person, he may induce her to spoil the property and thereby injure the interest of the 'nokna'. To avoid this the 'nokrom' espouses his mother-in-law. Marriage between grandparents and grandchildren has also been reported from amongst the Gonds of Madhya Pradesh. Among the Lakhers of Lushai Hills marriage with the widowed stepmother and with the widow of the son is also found.[2]

The means of acquiring a mate in tribal society are varied and interesting. In the primitive society of India payment is the most common way of securing a bride. The amount,

1 T.C. Das—*The Purums*, p. 241.
2 Parry—*The Lakhers*, p. 294.

of course, varies according to the economic condition of the tribe. The Santals, Hos, Oraons, Kharias, Gonds, Nagas, Kukis, Bhills and others pay for their brides as a general rule. But even amongst them there are other means of getting a wife.

Marriage by service is the only way to secure a bride among the Purums of Manipur. The prospective groom has to serve in the house of his bride's father for three years. "He may be employed in any work that the sons of the house may be required to perform." He has board and lodging during this period in the house of his prospective father-in-law.[1] This practice is also found among the Rangkhol Kukios, Aimols, Anals and Chirus.

Marriage by capture is another approved method found among many of the Chota Nagpur tribes, such as the Hos, Santals, Mundas, Bhumijas, and others. Among the Bhumji of Seraikella it is even considered desirable by the parents of the bride. In negotiated marriages, too, the father of the girl requests the groom to take the bride away by force. The date and time for this are arranged mutually; the bride shows some resistance but ultimately allows herself to be abducted. Such an abduction-marriage increases the prestige of the bride's parents.[2]

When a boy falls in love with a girl who does not reciprocate his feelings or when her father is not agreeable to the match, the boy may force their hands by simply putting a vermilion mark on the forehead of the girl which, among them, constitutes formal marriage. Soon after this the boy leaves the village and remains in hiding till the matter is settled between the guardians of both the parties. This is found among the Santals, Bhumijas, Hos, Mundas and other tribes of Chota Nagpur and Orissa.

Marriage by elopement is another common method among these tribes. When a boy and a girl love each other but their guardians are not agreeable to the match the parties take resort to this means. After two or three months they come back to the village and are accepted as man and wife.

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1 T.C. Das—*The Purums*, P. 242.

2 T. C. Das—*The Bhumijas of Seraikella*, P. 12.

Intrusion-marriage is another peculiar method of securing a mate which is found among the Santals and other cognate tribes. Here the initiative is taken by the bride. When a boy has intimate relations with a girl whom he promises to marry but postpones the ceremony continually, she stealthily enters his hut one early morning and takes her seat in one corner. The mother of the boy tries to drive out the girl by all means, short of physical force. If the girl sticks to her position to the last, she wins her case. The neighbours assemble in the courtyard, the village officers put in their appearance and the boy is forced to marry her formally. Levirate and sorrorate are two other means through which a man may get a wife. The former is quite common among the tribes of India, though the latter is of rare occurrence.

Coming to the forms of marriage we find all the three of them, namely, monogamy, polyandry and polygyny, among the Indian tribes. Monogamy is the most prevalent form but it is not obligatory for any tribe of India. The human sex ratio is approximately 1 : 1 and not even 1 : 2. Thus, nature militates against bigamy. But man has disturbed this natural balance in various artificial ways. Female infanticide in the past, for example, disturbed the sex-ratio of the Todas of the Nilgiri Hills and brought about polyandry or marriage of one woman with more than one man at the same time. Among this tribe, for every 100 women there were 259, 202, and 171 men in succeeding generations. The gradual decrease in the proportion of males was due to the ban on female infanticide imposed by the British administrators. But the increase in the proportion of females, instead of leading to individual marriages, brought about what is called group-marriage in social anthropology. As fraternal polyandry is practised by the Todas, each of a number of brothers in a family now marries a girl but he does not assert the right of exclusive possession over her. All the girls thus married by the brothers individually become common wives to all the brothers. In Jaunswar Bawar polyandry is attributed to poverty and the consequent desire to keep the family property undivided by allowing a common wife to all the brothers.

Polygyny is almost universally allowed in primitive society but rarely practised by individuals. Economic condition is

the limiting factor. Tribal chiefs in Upper Assam sometimes indulge in large number of wives but ordinary people remain satisfied with one. Economic utility seems to be the most important cause for polygyny among the Indian tribes. The wife is a source of free labour. The desire for children, the lucky inheritance of one or more wives from father or elder brother, the craving for prestige, and occasional concupiscence are other grounds for a multiplicity of wives, though they may not be regarded as very important ones.

In every tribe marriage is brought about by a number of rituals which give social recognition to the union. Dancing, feasting, and music—both vocal and instrumental—give publicity to, and serve as evidence of, the union. Some of the rituals symbolise the union of two individuals by tying their clothes, hands or bodies, or mixing their blood. Instances of one or other of these rites are found in all the tribes of India.

The residence of the married couple after the union is an important factor in society. The bride generally comes to reside in the house of her husband's father which is known as patrilocal residence. Here she loses much of her independence and remains a foreigner in the society of her husband's agnates. In important affairs of the family her opinion is not sought for. Most of the tribes of India practise patrilocal residence. But there are some, such as the Khasis of Assam, among whom the husband goes to live with the wife in her mother's house. Here his authority is curtailed to a considerable extent; he is simply an earner and begetter. This kind of matrilocal residence overshadows the husband and takes away much of the initiative of the main earner of the family.

There is a third type of residence which may be called 'neolocal' in which a newly married couple goes to live at a new place away from the residence of the parents of both the parties and outside the influence of the agnates of both groups. This type of residence is rare among the Indian tribes. A very peculiar situation is observed among the Syntengs of Jaintia Hills among whom the husband and wife do not live together and found a family. Both remain attached to their family of orientation. The husband visits the wife at night and is not responsible for her and her children's maintenance. This duty devolves upon her

brothers. There are other types of residence, too, which we need not discuss here.

Divorce, remarriage and widowhood are also elements of the marital institution. Divorce is quite common among the tribes of India. Among the Khasis there are very few middle-aged persons who have not changed their mates once or twice. Divorce is brought about by a formal ceremony in most of the cases. *Sakam-arach,* which literally means leaf-tearing, is the regular divorce ritual of the Santals which is performed in the presence of the whole village. The husband and the wife tear three 'sal' leaves each and upset a brass pot filled with water with invocations to Singh Bonga, the Sun-god. The Oraons of Ranchi have a very sensible custom which prescribes that a widower must either marry a widow or a divorced woman and not a maiden. But human ingenuity has found a way to circumvent this healthy custom by getting the maiden-bride married first to a tree and then to the human bridegroom.

Marriage as a social institution thus affects the life of the group as well as of the individual in a very intimate way. It regulates their conduct at every moment of their existence. Individual peace of mind and happiness rest upon the proper working of this institution. Other social institutions like those of property, law, education and religion also affect human life in the same way. The smooth working of these institutions and of the units referred to before depends upon a complete adjustment of these factors.

Indian tribal life, even a few decades ago, was well adjusted and happy. But this cannot be said about it now. The impact of modern culture has brought to them new ideas and articles. The old simple life with few necessities, which could be satisfied by local efforts, has been abandoned and new ideas have given rise to new wants. The improvement of communications has given a further impetus to this trend. This has brought about dissatisfaction with the old order. A new life is visible on the horizon. The Indian tribals are now consciously trying to bring about this new life as quickly as possible. It is a great experiment of dynamic sociology, the results of which have still to be seen.

TRIBAL ECONOMY

Nirmal Kumar Bose

There seems to be an increasing interest in the 19 million tribal inhabitants of India, but unfortunately the quality of the interest, and the kind of material on which the interest is fed, is often such as to give very much a one-sided view of tribal life as it exists today. Truth is often prosaic and many people seem to thrive on a romantic rather than a truthful picture of the situation.

The writer is reminded of his experience in central Orissa in 1928, when only after considerable difficulty could he come across a very old woman who used to dress in leaves from the jungle, just because that was the tribal custom, while all the rest had began to wear ordinary clothes produced by the Oriya caste of Pans. There was one other woman in the same village who was too poor to buy cloth and therefore wore leaves, while she partly covered the upper part of her body with an old rag. None the less, a well-known journal published as late as 1948 a whole bunch of beautiful photographs of young women of the same tribe and from very nearly the same place, in which they wore leaves, while their healthy bare bodies were exposed to the sun. Evidently that must have been very pleasing to the author and some of his readers, who took a vicarious pleasure in the existence of such 'natural' savages in the midst of India's fast changing economic life. But when it comes to truth, it lies as far from the real state of affairs as Miss Mayo's *Mother India* did, in spite of the fact that the latter could support by means of photographs every bit of the statements she had made. The fact that the anthropologist is actuated by sympathy while Miss Mayo was moved by hatred does not bring the former any nearer the truth on that account.

It must be realised that the life of the tribal people in India does not consist of one continuous round of music and dance, nor do they always feel persecuted by cleverer and

more powerful people. If they do, as does happen at times, they feel no different from the millions of our rural countrymen who are lost in neglect and ignorance, and whose lives are blighted by the rapaciousness of their cleverer neighbours. The fact that the tribal people speak languages not spoken by other people need not on that account alone make us feel more sympathetic towards them than towards others whom we generally leave to their own fate.

This rather pessimistic introduction is necessary so that we may not be drawn away from our effort to find out the truth in regard to the economy of our tribal neighbours owing to a wrong turn in our sympathies.

But when it comes to what is true and what is not true concerning the economic condition of people who often speak a tongue of their own and who inhabit the hills and jungles of our land, we have to confess at the very outset that this is rather inadequately known so far as accurate quantities are concerned. We do know the broad outlines, and the details in a number of specific cases, but when it comes to the whole of India and its 19 million tribal inhabitants, it is more difficult to generalise than in the case of India's rural or urban population, about whom a fair amount of information has already been gathered through numerous economic enquiries.

In trying to draw a broad outline, let us make a departure, and begin at the more complex end instead of at the simple one. Among some tribal people like the Khasis of Assam or the Oraons and Mundas of Chota Nagpur, there has been a large measure of conversion to Christianity. When by such conversion a man becomes free from the traditions emanating from the caste system, there is no hindrance to his taking up any occupation he may choose, provided he has the opportunity to do so. Of those who have been converted, a number have proved to be some of India's best citizens. They have taken to all kinds of occupations, such as teaching, medicine, nursing and so on, while their poorer compatriots have become more skilled in agriculture, carpentry, blacksmithy than their heathen relations. Such people are in no way different from India's other teachers, doctors, nurses, farmers or artisans, except in so far as they may have profited by superior training or by force of example.

Among India's 19 million tribal inhabitants, this group however does not form a large proportion. Moreover, what is a cause for sorrow is that the converted tribal people often become so completely cut off from the rest of their own people, sometimes even from the rest of the Indian people, that they exist in a kind of isolation which is healthy neither for themselves nor for their neighbours. In the new India of today, this separatism is, however, likely to disappear as we work together with determination for the advancement of our motherland.

The vast number of tribal people are, however, fast being converted into tillers of the soil. What they formerly were like, or what some of their relations still are, will be described a little later. But as we have seen, the majority of these people, whether they are the Santal or the Lepcha, the Gond or the Juang, they are fast trying to dig their roots into the soil, and in course of time become no different from others who have been ploughing the land and raising crops for many generations.

Most tribal people, when they live by themselves, have a certain measure of freedom and pride in their own traditions and customs. But the productive system which they used to pursue in the hills and jungles was previously such that only a small number of people could be supported per square mile of land. Figures have never been gathered carefully in this respect in India, but the chances are that people like the Andamanese, some groups among whom lived exclusively by collecting wild food and by hunting, could not support more than two or three people per square mile of inhabited territory.

Cultivation by means of cutting down a patch of forest and then planting seeds in the burnt earth and ashes with the help of a digging stick is perhaps capable of supporting about twenty to thirty people per square mile, provided this is supplemented by a little hunting and collecting of food from the wilds. But, as we said, figures regarding the carrying capacity of different modes of production current among our tribal population, of the density of population where the people live by sole dependence on one of these methods, and

where they supplement it by means of other types of activity, are all sadly lacking in accuracy at present.

In any case, when such tribal groups are gradually confronted by farmers, who slowly spread into jungle territory when land becomes scarce in the plains below, they tend to do one of three things. They may raid the encampments of the farmers and frighten them away, or, if the latter are powerful, they may themselves retire into denser jungles where the old way of life can be pursued, or they may themselves take to the plough, or to some other occupation which fits in with the economic needs of their more advanced neighbours. A few examples may not be out of place in this connection.

The Birhors or Makarakhiya Kulha of Chota Nagpur and Orissa were originally no different from the rest of their Munda-speaking neighbours who live close by. But there is reason to believe that they have become specialised in the manufacture of ropes from certain jungle creepers and have also become more nomadic in their habits after coming into contact with their agricultural neighbours. Some of the latter speak Mundari tongues while others speak Oriya or Hindi, but all need the strong ropes which the Birhors manufacture from creepers in the jungle. The specialisation of the Birhors, and even their exaggerated nomadism seem to be an after-effect of contact with economically more advanced neighbours. These have served as defence mechanisms among a people who hesitated to change in a given direction, and retained a pattern of activities more in accord with their old-time culture.

Such economic, and consequent cultural, adaptations have, however, not been very numerous. In Orissa and Chota Nagpur, groups of Birhors and Kharias who have adopted specialised methods of exploiting the jungle, and of exchanging the products for money with which they buy cloth, salt, iron and other necessaries from their more advanced neighbours, form a very small percentage of the total number of the tribal population. Many Birhors and Kharias, as well as people like the Ho, the Munda, the Santal, the Bhumij and others have been wholly converted into agriculturists, no

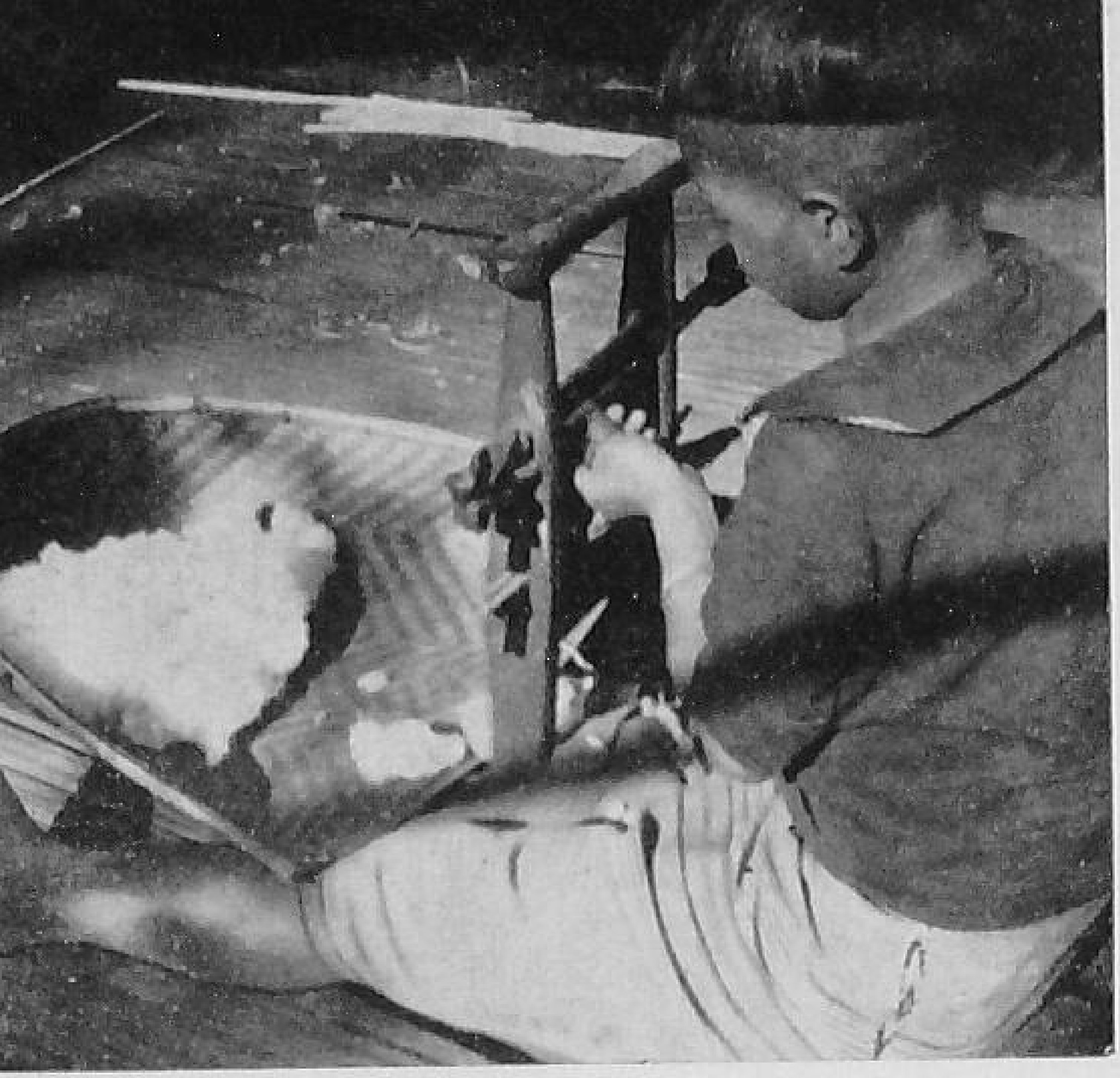
Abor girl thrashing paddy

Village granaries

Savras at the market

Ponu trimming her friend's hair

Urali of Travancore hills



Child learning to spin

Harvesting of paddy

different from the Mahato or Kurmi or other agricultural castes who live beside them.

Or perhaps there is a difference. And that difference is often due to the lack of skill or perseverance which an ancient agricultural caste like the Kurmi possesses, as it may be due to the ignorance and simple faithful nature which the tribal people may perhaps evince in relation to their more sophisticated neighbours. In a few areas, tribal people who settle down to cultivation are robbed in the following manner. When a jungle or difficult patch of land has to be reclaimed for the first time, when the pioneers have to struggle against snakes and tigers, the tribal people are often welcomed with open arms by the landed proprietors. The latter are told that they may clear as much land as they wish, and for the first ten or twenty years need pay no rent to anybody. They naturally set to work with an avidity which is not possible for more routine-bound farmers, whose soil has been prepared after generations of labour. After some time, however, the tribal people need money, and they accept loans either from the landlord himself or from a moneylender. The rate of interest is enormous; they go on paying interest year after year, yet there are cases where they are still in debt after having paid the capital back three times over by way of interest. The poor man's labour is practically forfeited, until he one day purchases his freedom by selling the land which he built up by the sweat of his brow. And thus is added one more to the number of proletarians in our land who have nothing to sell except their labour.

Those in sympathy with the tribal people have shed tears on their behalf, have even cried themselves hoarse against the injustices done to them by unscrupulous usurpers and landed proprietors. These are all justified, as is justified any sympathy for the down-trodden anywhere on the face of the earth. But the sorry tale of how land-hungry tribal people are made to serve a purpose and then dispensed with is no different from what is happening in many other parts of the world. Kenya and South Africa, and, not so long ago, Fiji and Demerara or Mauritius presented no tale which was

more sordid than the last. The cure lies, not in merely getting angry with the exploiters in one's own helplessness, or even in taking up the fight on their behalf, or in helping in the passage of legislation which might relieve them of part of their burden, but in so devising means that they, even with their unaided strength, may if necessary, find a redress for the wrongs from which they suffer. And in this respect Mahatma Gandhi's method of non-violence may offer a solution, the possibilities of which yet remain to be more fully explored.

We have thus far dealt with that part of India's tribal population who have come under the economic influence of their more advanced neighbours. As a result of that contact, most of them have become agriculturists, sometimes owning land, sometimes not, while a few like the Birhor or the Kharia have taken up special, nomadic occupations. There are some at the southern extremity of India who find employment as labourers in the reserved forests owned by the Government or as producers of charcoal in the Western Ghats.

Scattered here and there in small numbers, some still remain inside the Indian peninsula, and more so in the north-eastern corner of our vast country, who continue to live by means of the predatory form of cultivation described above. This method of axe-cultivation is quite popular among many of the Mongolian tribes living near the north-eastern border of India, where both the rainfall and the soil are particularly favourable for such cultivation. But the exact number of those who depend wholly or partly on this method is not correctly known.

In the central jungle belt of India, there are still a few tribes like the Bhuiya, the Juang or the Savara, many of whom still practise the type of axe-cultivation described above. But what is interesting today is that, in Orissa in particular, this form of cultivation has become a supplementary form of industry. Even when a family of Savaras possesses cultivated fields in the plains, they sometimes have their own fields for axe-cultivation up on the slopes of the hills, where they raise special types of crops which are readily purchased by their neighbours. In some cases, the more pri-

mitive form is so much in favour that the Oriya-speaking landed proprietors engage their tribal farm-hands for work in the fields below, as well as to set fire in the jungles above when the season is ripe. Thus the primitive form of cultivation continues in peaceful, but unfortunately destructive, co-existence with the more advanced methods of utilising the soil.

In any case, this brings us to the point that perhaps no tribal group in India, except some people on the Indo-Tibetan border, is wholly self-sufficient in its economy. All the tribal economies within India today are subject to the larger economic forces to which the people of India as a whole are subject. Only, the bond in some cases is close, while in others, it is of a more tenuous nature. Even in the case of the so-called self-contained Abors there is a thin trickle of trade. Iron, salt and other necessities are hardly procurable by means of one's own labour, although there still exist tribes in the heart of India who continue to produce very small quantities of iron with the help of earthen blast furnaces about four feet high, and in which the reduction is done with charcoal, while the blast is supplied by a few pairs of foot-driven vertical bellows. Apart from a few quixotic cases of this kind, tribal groups everywhere have already become tied up with the larger economy of their neighbours, even when the latter do not speak the same language and have various types of social and religious customs.

Nobody thinks today of keeping the tribal people isolated in order to preserve among them their sense of freedom. Nobody today advises India to stand in isolation so that she may not feel small by comparison with the bigger powers. Such an attitude is neither possible nor desirable. Whether we wish it or not, the economy of tribal India is fast changing in one direction or another. The only safeguard required is to assure the tribal people of enough power to prevent them from being converted into helpless elements in a larger economic organisation which they cannot wholly comprehend. The only way to achieve it is through education and organisation, and the preparation to share with equality the burdens, as well as the glories, of a new Indian economy which we are all trying to build up.

And in this matter, the 19 million tribals do not, and should not, stand on a different footing from the rest of our countrymen who work in the fields, factories and workshops, and who need the same encouragement and education, and the organisation for power with which Mahatma Gandhi tried to equip them through his technique of non-violence.

EDUCATION

K. P. Chattopadhyay

It is recognised by all citizens of good sense in our Republic that it is essential to raise the economically and educationally backward tribal people to the general level of the other sections of our nation, and also to go forward as one with them towards better conditions and higher culture. It is necessary to state this ideal clearly, inasmuch as the goal in view determines the mode of approach to it. This is even more necessary in view of the fact that certain anthropologists and organisations have advocated the segregation of the tribal folk and to leave them to their primitive mode of life and work.

Segregation was really started by the British in this country in pursuit of their policy of Divide and Rule and in this they were helped by their religious and welfare organisations. In the changed political set-up there is no room for such anti-national activities which are also against the interests of the tribal folk, since backwardness and isolation can only lead to eventual extinction.

At the same time it has to be realised that all people, including simple folk, have their history which with other factors has determined their cultural pattern. In order to attain a happy life, it is essential that forces making for change or those which are already exerting a vital influence in society should be directed into channels that will help in the economic and cultural progress of the community. As the sage of Dakshineswar* has aptly said, "The horses have to be turned round the proper corner". In this connection it should be remembered that the tribal folk almost everywhere are badly off in the matter of worldly goods. Hence any change contemplated must provide for the improvement of economic conditions.

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*Ramakrishna Paramahansa.

It is perhaps not so well realised that the tribal people all over India had well organised systems of education for the young up to the age of adolescence. In childhood the children learnt at home, trying to imitate the actions of their elders. Later, a definite institution called the 'Association' took over their training. Both during childhood at home, and later in the 'Dormitories' as they are sometimes called, the training given to the child related to the activities of tribal life. Education among them, at every stage, is linked with the life-activity and this aspect of it compares well with the latest principles of education. Our programme of education for the tribal people should, therefore, arrange for a system which is life centred.

In a detailed discussion of the problem in my book, *Our Education,* I have indicated how a syllabus could be drawn up for the primary stages incorporating activities familiar to the tribal folk; and later how transition is possible to activities associated with the culture of the more advanced folk of adjacent regions. Such a change takes account of the major principles of education mentioned earlier and also fits in with the ideal of tribal education enunciated here. It follows further from this discussion that the content of the text-books that will go with such learning through doing should have matter drawn from the tribal culture in the earlier stages, and later incorporate lessons bearing on the culture of their neighbours.

Also the medium of instruction will naturally be the mother tongue, the tribal language spoken at home. The regional language should have its place as a subject of study in the upper forms. Regarding the script to be adopted the solution is not so easy. If our Republic had a single simple script, that could have been the script of non-literate people having no alphabet of their own. As it is, the tribal people should adopt the script of the regional language of the State, if the State has a single script. A few new phonemes, to represent sounds peculiar to the tribal language, should, however, be added. These should be drawn up bearing in mind the need of new phonemes for the various tribal languages, so that no symbol should have more than one

sound, nor should the same sound be indicated by more than one symbol in different areas.

It may appear on the surface to be somewhat out of place to discuss economic changes in a note on education. Since, however, we have accepted that education should be life centred, and that our aim is also to change the economic conditions, it follows that such a discussion is inevitable.

The tribal people in many areas have lost their lands through the undesirable activities of their neighbours. They are not, however, the only sufferers in this respect. Many of the scheduled castes and even more advanced peasantry find themselves in a similar position. To quote an example, in the undivided province of Bengal, from 1936 onward the sale of agricultural land amounted each year to about one per cent of the total and this figure rose to three per cent in 1943-1944 during the famine. Since then it has been about two per cent per annum. To protect the tribals from losing their land, it is essential to enact land legislation, and redistribute land among them. Also, co-operative activities in the field of agriculture, prevalent till recently in most of the tribal areas, should be encouraged through practical instructions in the schools. Training should also be given in schools to improve archaic tools and implements. This has been done in some areas by non-official organisations, like the work of the Don Bosco School among the Khasis. In other areas as in Melghat, as late as 1941 when I visited the Korku villages, the tribal people were still using adzes to make planks from timber, even though saws would have been more effective and profitable.

Just as it is possible to change archaic tools and replace them by those employed by our peasantry, it is possible to introduce modern technological advances among the tribal people. This has been carried out successfully among maritime hunters and fishermen like the Chukchis of Chukotak, and the pastoral Kirghiz of Kirghizia in the U.S.S.R. Similar changes are taking place among the tribal folk living in the People's Republic of China. As the standard of education in our country is not lower than it was in Czarist Russia in 1917, and both in this respect and in the matter of technological progress, our country was already superior in 1947

to the level of these attainments in China at that time, there are no grounds for thinking that such changes cannot be brought about by us among our tribal folk.

One word of caution has to be sounded here. The education of the tribal people is directly linked with the activities of their life. This link helps them to understand the usefulness of such education in tribal life. Even in childhood when a Santal boy hunts a field rat and roasts it, he is really getting food to eat. When a Santal girl cooks some herbs, it is not make-believe cooking as it is with our children. The greens cooked are edible leaves and are eaten. In the Dormitory, the activities are linked directly with the village festivals and ceremonies or with its economic and social life. In consequence tribal children need no persuasion to go to these schools and learn their lessons. The attitude of their peers and of the villagers ensures their education. For historical reasons, gaps have appeared between schooling and the end in view in the advanced cultures. Hence the long paraphernalia of discipline. It is, however, possible to link even advanced teaching at school with life. Thus technological processes may be shown historically, thereby enabling the student to learn his lessons with a grasp of the goal. Such teaching is beneficial to all students and is even more essential in schools for the tribal children who are traditionally accustomed to this way of training.

I shall conclude my note by pointing out certain shortcomings in the existing arrangements for tribal education. At the Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Areas Conference held in Delhi in June 1952, both the President and the Prime Minister stressed the need of giving education to the tribal people in their mother tongue and also encouraging the valuable elements of their culture. The State Governments are, however, not adhering to these principles strictly. In Assam almost everywhere, except in the Khasi Hills where the schools are of long standing, the medium of instruction is Assamese. The reason given is that the teachers find it difficult to learn the tribal languages as if it is easier for the larger number of tribal pupils to learn Assamese. In Orissa, the medium of instruction is Oriya. Throughout Chota Nagpur the medium of instruction is Hindi in the high schools

for tribal children. This was also the case in Berar in Madhya Pradesh. Part of the growing discontent among the tribal folk is due to this policy of forcible assimilation. All educationists and well-wishers of the tribals will condemn such steps as not being in the interest of the nation and in the interest of the tribals.

TRIBAL ART

Verrier Elwin

Some time ago I published a book on tribal art in middle India, which has, on the whole, been received very kindly and has, I think, done something to reveal to readers both in India and abroad what our tribal brethren can do in the way of creating beautiful things. But a friend of mine, who is at once a poet and an art-critic, was very disappointed in the book, for he said "most of the objects you have collected and illustrated are neither beautiful nor artistic. If we are to use the word art in any intelligible sense, then Indian tribal art (except perhaps in parts of Assam) simply does not exist."

Now I wonder if that is true. By and large, I think not. It is true that primitive art in India does not reach the standard of that of the Ivory Coast in West Africa; it cannot compare with the wonderful masks that were found in Benin; New Zealand, North America and parts of the Pacific have produced far finer work. But all the same our tribal art here is not to be dismissed as negligible. After all, we cannot judge primitive art by our own standards. There is an absence of perspective; there is often distortion of reality, strange and ugly exaggerations, and in India at least there is a lot of work which does not appear at first sight to be very significant.

But, as Leonhard Adam says in his very useful little Pelican book on Primitive Art, "For the full appreciation of a work of art it should be seen as far as possible in the setting for which it was created." This is particularly true of primitive art because of its strange and altogether different cultural background. The statue of an ancestor or of a deity under African conditions of light. and intended to remain always in the gloom of a shrine or temple, cannot be expected to produce the same effect when it has been removed from its original surroundings and displayed in a glass cabinet in a European room or an Indian room either.

And this, of course, leads to the important point that Indian tribal art is almost entirely what we now call 'functional' and cannot be appreciated apart from its utilitarian or social significance. There is very little art for art's sake in a tribal village. Much of the art has a religious or magical purpose; much again has social importance; there is very little that is simply decorative or that aims at the creation of beauty and nothing else.

Let us look then at this motif of religion or magic that has directed so much creative activity. Primitive art, says a writer in a book on the arts of West Africa, "is the most pure, most sincere form of art there can be, partly because it is deeply inspired by religious ideas and spiritual experience, and partly because it is entirely unselfconscious as art; there are no tricks which can be acquired by the unworthy, and no technical exercises which can masquerade as works of inspiration".

The worship of idols and images, which has been so potent a source of inspiration in other parts of the world, is weak in tribal India. It is extremely rare to find any representation of the tribal gods. The great tribes—the Gonds, the Santals, the Bhils, the so-called Naga groups—represent their deities, if they make them at all, by stones, lumps of earth, bits of unshaped wood; indeed their shrines are nearly always empty. Which is curious in view of the fact that tribal gods are imagined, as we see in the mythologies, in essentially anthropomorphic terms.

Images are in fact made not to represent the gods but as offerings to the gods. In Bastar, for example, the Murias offer at their shrines attractive little brass images of horses, elephants, human figures, or magicians in a swing. Other tribes make offerings of birds, horses and elephants of clay.

Marriage has inspired less art than we might have expected. To primitive folk a wedding is a time when those engaged in it are subject to peculiar dangers : they are vulnerable to the attacks of ghostly enemies, who may render the bridal pair sterile or even compass their death. And so in the marriage-booths, where these are made, all sorts of witch-baffling patterns and mazes are drawn on the ground

Elaborate crowns for the bride and groom afford further protection. Among the Gonds of Mandla, I discovered a number of remarkable lampstands which were placed in the centre of the marriage-booth: some of these were made of iron by the very primitive blacksmith tribe of Agarias and showed beautifully made heads of deer; others were of wood —a human head and arms grew out of a tree trunk in a singularly striking manner.

It is the Santals who have lavished the greatest attention on their marriages, particularly on the marriage palanquins, in which bride and groom are carried from house to house. These are elaborately carved—or rather most tribal work in wood is chopped rather than carved, the tool used being a sort of adze or else a *dao*—and the carvings symbolically represent the joy and comradeship of a wedding and also aim at what one may call an atmosphere of fertility. There are carvings both in relief and in the round of meetings between men and women, and animals. Cows greet one another, head to head; friends embrace each other; monkey welcomes monkey paw to paw. And for fertility there are cows with their jam, who place grave-images in the little shrines for the dead with children at the breast; there are even carvings of pregnant women. Everything is intended to make the palanquin and the marriage itself auspicious.

The sombre paraphernalia of death is another source of tribal art. We find it in the near-primitive fisherfolk of Ganjam, who place grave-images in the little shrines for the dead which they build on the seashore. Some of the older examples of these are very strange and wild; they really look like forlorn and disfigured ghosts. The more modern images are smarter and more sophisticated: gaily coloured men and women, often riding on horses and sometimes on elephants, are placed on the graves. I have one specimen of a father holding his dead child in his lap as he carries him on an elephant to the unknown land of death, for it was assumed that the child would not know his way in that mysterious land.

The Marias of Bastar make splendid wooden pillars for the more important of their dead. These are carved with the things that interested the deceased: we see dancers in their

finery, women serving rice-beer from great pots, hunting scenes, shamans in the act of divination. But it is the Phoms and Konyaks of the North-East Frontier Agency in Assam who excel in making grave-effigies. These are believed by some anthropologists to provide either temporary resting places for the soul of the dead or more permanent receptacles for their soul-essence. The figures are carved realistically with the usual tatoo marks and ornaments of the dead man or woman, and are placed in little shrines which are decorated with spears and other weapons.

But while on the one hand death encourages art, on the other it is its enemy, not only because its relentless fingers stifle the creative purpose for ever, but because some tribes believe that anything beautiful that a man has made must perish with his body. Thus the Santals bury or cremate any fine piece of carving, a favourite decorated flute, or a splendidly ornamented fiddle with the dead. Many of the tombs of the Changs, Phoms and Konyaks—and I have no doubt of several other tribes along our frontier—have the appearance of regular museums. On the bamboo platforms upon which the corpse is exposed are hung a great variety of ornaments, pieces of cloth, baskets, weapons, traps. These are allowed to rot in the wind and rain, and I have often been tempted to remove them and so save them from oblivion. It is a real waste, a tragic waste, but even to touch them would be a major breach of a strict taboo.

Another very interesting way in which religion has influenced tribal art is to be found in the remarkable wall-paintings made by the Saoras of Koraput and Ganjam. The Saoras have a very strong sense of the reality and power of the unseen world, which they people with a great company of gods, ghosts and ancestors. These unseen beings are continually interfering in human life and it is necessary, therefore, to keep them happy and contented by an elaborate system of sacrifices and by actions calculated to flatter their vanity. Among such actions is the custom of making paintings on the walls of houses. These are made in honour of the dead, to drive away diseases, to promote the fertility of the crops and on the occasion of certain great festivals. For both disease and fertility are controlled by the unseen powers.

In most villages there is a special artist who makes these paintings and he always acts under the inspiration of a dream. On the night before he is to paint the picture, he sleeps on the ground in front of the wall on which he is to paint and he expects to see in a dream exactly what he is to do. The walls of Saora houses are coloured red and so he makes his picture with a white paint made of rice-flour and water. The paintings are of very great variety and some of them are extremely striking. They nearly all tell some sort of story and depict the adventures of the spirits in the other world. Here you will see the houses of the gods with their retainers and their pets—for the gods keep tigers and monkeys in their houses as we keep cats and dogs. You may see too the porcupine who is the priest of the other world and the peacock who is its watchman. Sometimes you will see aeroplanes, motor-cars and trains, for civilisation has influenced the other world as well as this, and gods and ghosts now enjoy all the amenities of modern transport.

These pictures are made for use rather than for display. They are for the eyes of spirits, not of men. Often they are painted in the darkest corner of the house, or may be hidden behind gourds and pots. In fact, it is desirable that human beings should not look at them, still less photograph them, for there is always the danger that a careless word or an unguarded giggle may offend the spirits. The gods are not interested in beauty; they want flattery.

The Saoras have no art that is not inspired and directed by religion. In their wall-paintings, we see in an unusually vivid manner how cult and myth can move a people to some sort of artistic expression. Here is the record of their dreams, their eschatological hopes and fears, the dramatisation of their theological beliefs.

How far is Indian tribal art in the grand tradition of India? Has it anything to do with it at all? I think it has. There is a strange atmosphere in India, an unseen power which down the ages has driven men everywhere to the love of beauty, directing them to a common design and symbolism. And still today, on wall and door, on comb and tobacco-case, the modern tribesman carves geometric and symbolic designs that

are thousands of years old, going right back to the ancient civilisation of the Indus Valley. All the way down from Harappa and Amri there has persisted the motif of the loop with pendants dropping from the belly; from Samarra has survived the pattern of contiguous upright and inverted triangles with diagonal hatching, sloping alternately right and left.

But on the other hand, there is nothing in the classic Indian tradition to compare with the art which has been inspired by head-hunting.

Among a number of border tribes—such as the Changs, the Konyaks, the Phoms, the Kalyo-Kengnyus, the Sangtams and others—head-hunting, which has so miraculously been brought to an end by the efforts of our administration, was the main source of decorative and ornamental work. Only a man who had taken a head could carve a human figure in the 'morung', only he could wear the more splendid type of cloth and ornament, only he had a magnificent tomb erected in his honour. Bamboo drinking mugs were carved with extraordinary skill, but the central motif was always the human head. Wooden heads were carved, and brass heads cast by the cire-perdue process, to be worn by the successful warrior. Now that head-hunting has come to an end, it will be interesting to see what other inspiration will be found.

It may be that there will be no other inspiration. For, on the whole, to study tribal art in modern India is a melancholy task. I have compared my own feelings to those of Severn as he bent over the bedside of the dying Keats, and watched the vitality fading from the fine sensitive face, saw the passing for ever of any hope of hearing again from those lips the perfect line, the inevitable phrase. Today we watch a great thing die.

The march of civilisation, for some reason, has a paralysing effect on tribal people. Open a school in a village—and the people cease to carve. Start a project—and they remove their lovely ancient ornaments. Open a shop—and they will throng to buy the shoddiest, most gaudy products of our factories. For the tribesman, whose taste in his own sphere is so fine and true, both for design and colour, loses all sense of it when face to face with what he so wrongly conceives to be a higher type of culture.

Is the task hopeless? Can tribal art be saved? I think that we should try. Much will depend on the policy of our educationalists. In West Africa, the Achimota College has had a singular success in reviving Benin art, particularly in the sphere of brass-casting; its stress on art in education and the respect with which it regards the traditional products of the African craftsman has done much also to reinvigorate the dying art of wood-carving on the west coast. Its aim, however, is not merely antiquarian; it attempts to adapt the best things in African arts and crafts to the needs of a changing society. That too should be our aim here.

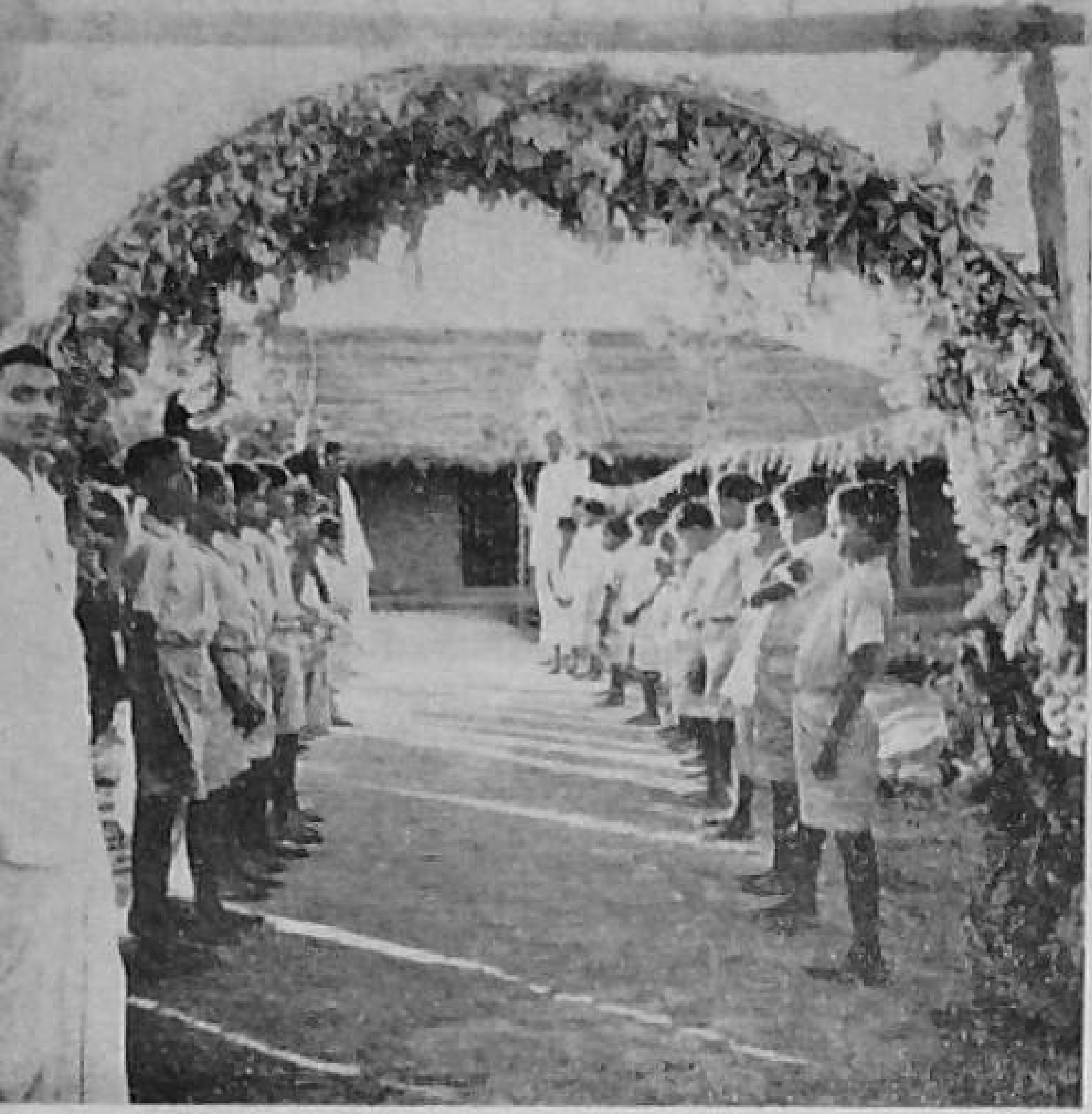
If we ourselves regard the tribesmen of India with respect, we shall help them to preserve their own self-respect and to keep their pride in their own traditions. But the most potent vivifying force in the world is love. After all, you and I and all of us were actually and quite literally created by an act of love. And I believe that if only civilised and educated people would love our tribesmen, really love them, that affection would have a magic effect, both on their life and welfare and on their art.

Weaving a mat

Naga war-dance

Angami Nagas

Traditional Bhil greeting



Sevashram school in the Bhuiyan forest colony

Yerukula weaving a basket

TRIBAL ADMINISTRATION IN NEFA

N. K. Rustomji

There is a growing consciousness today of the country's responsibilities towards the tribal people, and consequently a keener interest in questions relating to the development of the tribal areas. There has been, in recent years, a reaction against the tendency to regard the tribal people and their institutions as subjects of curiosity and the emphasis has shifted in the direction of speeding up developmental activities amongst the Adivasis with a view to bringing them on a par with the more 'advanced' people of the country.

The formulating of plans is, in itself, not a matter of great complication, and were the administrator's responsibilities fulfilled in the mere establishing of schools and hospitals, the tribal problem would not look so large. Experience in the actual field of administration, however, has shown that the technique of administration in the tribal areas and the handling of tribal problems is a matter of specialised knowledge and the methods and procedure that might serve their purpose well enough in normal, settled areas will often, if applied amongst the tribal people, lead to serious repercussions and prove, in the end, harmful to their interests.

We are concerned here with the tribal people of India's North-East Frontier, and it is necessary—if we are to understand, even in broad outline, the nature of the problem and the correct approach for its solution—to have an idea of the basic and inherent features underlying these remote frontier regions, which have been the home of the hill-people for generations past.

The first point to be borne in mind when planning for these regions is that they are generally sparsely populated, and the villages, sometimes comprising only a few houses with three or four dozen inhabitants, are often separated from one another by marches of several days across the hills. The sparseness of population and the inaccessibility of the areas, on account

of extreme difficulties of communication, are the main reasons for which welfare activities cannot proceed as speedily in these hill-regions as in the settled areas of the plains. In certain regions, again, the basic economy of the people, which is agricultural, is at such a low level that it is as much as they can do to find sufficient sustenance during the twelve months of the year to keep body and soul together. Unless, therefore, the basic minimum requirements of food and clothing for the people can first be ensured, it is not likely that they can be fully responsive to a welfare programme based on the provision of educational and medical facilities.

Conditions of life in the hill-regions on the borders of Assam are of the most arduous and exacting nature. Communications between the sparsely populated villages are often of extreme risk, involving treks over narrow ledges of only eight or nine inches width along the steep hills and along precipices sloping vertically down to raging torrents hundreds of feet below. Even the indigenous people themselves, inured to such conditions from birth, will often hesitate, during the monsoon season, to risk travelling along such tracks, and arrange, therefore, to carry out their marathon treks to the plains for their essential requirements during the winter months.

The above are amongst the more striking of the physical features of the frontier areas that have to be borne in mind by the administrator. Of no less importance, however, are the social and cultural features. These latter are, in fact, largely a corollary of the former. As the villages in the hill-areas are isolated and internal communications still undeveloped, intercourse has been hampered, and the tribal people, who came to their present habitat at different periods generations ago, have remained segregated not only from the rest of India but also from themselves. The unit, therefore, in terms of which the tribal people generally think is still the village. The village organisation, however, has been capable of development and self-expression only up to a point.

The struggle for survival has necessitated a strong corporate feeling for the village in the tribal areas of the North-East Frontier. This corporate feeling has, in its turn, resulted

in the evolution of a village administration that holds the people closely together and makes for village solidarity. Cases of dispute within the village are settled by the elders through the payment of compensation by the guilty to the aggrieved parties. The decision of the elders, when awarding such compensation, is accepted, and the village remains, as a consequence, strong within itself, so that, in the event of a feud with its neighbours, it may present a united front.

But in the absence of communications and contacts with the outside world, the fullest development and self-realisation of the community has, necessarily, been cut short. The way of life that has been evolved in the village may be suited well enough to meet the minimum requirements of the people for their survival. But their isolation has, to some extent, narrowed the scope of their social and cultural development and stood in the way of their imbibing deeply from the wide and divergent streams of other cultures, which might enrich their own and give it the variety and greater depth that are the fruit of a broader intellectual intercourse.

Travellers in the tribal areas will find fascination in the people and their customs, in their dance and their song. The tribals of the hills are, essentially, a happy, care-free folk. Life, though the struggle for existence may be hard, does not weigh heavily on them. Their philosophy is fresh and simple —the day's work to provide the essentials of food and clothing and relaxation in the evening, chatting and singing in their homes or at the village meeting-place. The dance is generally reserved for occasions of special importance, such as festivals, which are frequent, or the visit to the village of a personality of importance.

It is indeed heartening that in a world in which the spontaneity of dance and song seems to be fast fading, these arts, though in a simple form, still play an essential part in the life of the hill-people. There is a certain simplicity in the dance and song of the tribal people, uninfluenced as they have been by the more complicated techniques associated with these art-forms in modern times. But if they lack the variety of the artistic forms of more advanced cultures, they are still alive and vital, and hold a meaning and significance for the community in its daily life.

The above are some of the main features to be borne in mind by the administrator in his handling of the tribal problems in the North-East Frontier. Extensive tracts of the Frontier Districts had, until comparatively recent times, remained unadministered and unvisited. Administration has, under these conditions, to proceed in carefully measured phases. To have moved headlong into strange areas with the full-blown paraphernalia of the administrative machinery amongst tribal people, with whom contacts had not yet been established, and who might, with reason, be apprehensive of newcomers, would have been impracticable and unwise.

The history of the original penetration into some of the tribal areas during the last century has brought out the fatal results of proceeding in these areas without sufficient forethought and precaution. The military columns that first penetrated into the Lushai and the Naga Hills had met with stubborn resistance from the hill-people, and it was necessary for the administration of the time to resort to numerous and drastic punitive expeditions to keep the tribes in control. The despatch of punitive expeditions, however, accompanied often with the widespread destruction of tribal villages and devastation of their crops, was not likely to endear the hill-people to the administration, and the tribal people tended as a result to remain aloof and live their own separate lives.

The approach to tribal problems in recent years has been from a different angle. The essential fact to be borne in mind is that the same pattern of administration cannot be applied to all groups of people, irrespective of their stage of development. If, therefore, there is to be a successful handling of the tribal problem, the first requisite must be to understand fully the nature of the problem and to gather reliable data regarding the various areas and people to be served. For it is wiser in the long view to move steadily in the earlier stages in order to obtain a thorough grasp of the subject-matter and so be in a position to formulate a programme that is both practical of implementation and in the true interests of the people.

The first objective, therefore, in dealing with such tribal areas, as have not known administration before, must be to

establish contacts with the people, win their confidence and gain knowledge of the fundamentals relating to their way of life and their basic economy. But this, in itself, is not a task that can be accomplished in a day, particularly in the turbulent regions of the Naga Hills and the Burma border, where, until recent times, inter-village raids, resulting in the annihilation of entire villages, were not an infrequent occurrence. Where the mere movement of travellers was a matter of risk, the establishing of contacts naturally taxed all the resources of the local officers.

In former days, raids in which heads were taken would be followed, as a matter of course, by punitive expeditions, with the object of destroying the culprit village. A novel approach, however, has been adopted in recent years, which has proved to be justified by the results achieved. On receipt of information of a raid, the Political Officer or his Assistant is deputed to visit at once the affected areas, render relief to the afflicted by providing medical aid and food and clothing, and then bring the elders of the disputant villages together for an amicable settlement. The harmful results of raids are explained to the people, and, in most cases, the villages themselves finish up by representing that they would welcome a Government officer with a small body of troops being stationed in the area to maintain the peace and so enable the inhabitants to live without fear of one another and go out peacefully to their fields and cultivate them.

Together with the establishment of law and order, the strengthening of contacts with the tribal people and the gathering of knowledge of their way of life must follow closely the delicate task of guiding them along the path that will lead them to a healthier, happier and richer life. And the term 'guiding' has been used advisedly. For there is too often a tendency on the part of the administrator to regard himself as omniscient and to dictate, arbitrarily, what he, in his wisdom, has ruled to be the correct line of action.

The first maxim in tribal administration must be to approach problems in a manner that the tribal people will of themselves co-operate in their solution and not be required to act under pressure or compulsion. For the tribal people are

sensitive and have their self-respect. For generations they have lived according to their own lights and would justifiably resent the sudden imposition upon their community of a way of life that might appear strange to them. If, on the other hand, through example and practical illustrations, they can be shown the advantage of adopting practices that will be beneficial to them, they will readily co-operate with the administration for their introduction and speedy extension.

There have been countless instances in which the tribal people have, as a result of personal experience, given up superstitious practices and come to understand the benefits of the more scientific measures that the administration has set out to introduce amongst them. The majority of these are to be found in the medical field. Epidemics have broken out in villages and the villagers have, in the first instance, declined to avail themselves of the medical aid offered, and preferred to resort to incantations and the traditional sacrifices of bird and beast. When the latter have proved of no avail, they have been prevailed upon to allow themselves to be treated with modern drugs, and, on the showing of the results, have become convinced of their efficacy.

It is the first approach to the people and the manner in which the Welfare Departments first take up their work that is the most vital. For, if contacts have not been happily established, and if the confidence of the tribal people has not been firmly won, then no amount of planning can prove of much avail. Whatever will be done will be regarded as something of an alien growth, and plans for development will stagnate and bear no fruit. For, the essential factor in tribal administration is the personal factor—the personal approach of the administration and its agents towards the people who are to be served.

It has been indicated that, on account of their isolation, there is diversity in the way of life, customs and language of the tribal people. And it is on account of this diversity that no single formula can be applied and no single code or regulation can have equal applicability in each and every area. 'Red-tapism' is recognised as amongst the most pernicious defects of the administration even in the settled areas, where

the problems are generally of a more uniform nature and communications well developed. In the tribal areas, however, where the machinery of government is being established for the first time, red-tapism must spell certain distaster. If a tribal visiting the District Headquarters after a march of several days from his home-village asks for agricultural aid in the shape of seeds or tools, it will not do to say to him that 'the matter is being referred to higher authorities'.

He cannot afford to wait for more than a day or two at the Headquarters, and, once he turns back home, it may not be practicable for him to return within the next twelve months. The administration in such areas must, therefore, be both direct and prompt, or else the tribal people will lose faith, and prefer, after an experience or two of the vagaries of governmental procedure, to withhold their co-operation.

Together with a sympathetic approach of the people, the workers amongst the tribes must be men of adventure and elastic intellect. The mind must be constantly on the alert to discover ways and means of overcoming the hundred and one problems of administration in such unusual areas and amongst such unusual people. The successful administrator will be ever experimenting. For it is through experiment that, in the last resort, the most practical solution can be found to the knottiest problems. And if only a small percentage of the experiments meet with success, it will be something gained. But the worker who plods along the beaten track, hesitant to undertake any venture lest it might not meet with immediate success, will be of little use for work in areas where the commonly accepted rules and practices are impractical of implementation and are a hindrance to the development and growth of the people.

The technique of administration in the tribal areas is a science, no less than engineering or medicine. But it is an infant science, for whose mature development much experience and knowledge has yet to be gained. And upon the administrator of today lies the onerous responsibility of its development, so that the tribal people may be assisted to participate fully in the nation's life.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

S. N. Bhattacharyya

Of India's total population, about 5.4 per cent are tribal people, according to the 1951 Census. Obviously, no development scheme, particularly the Community Development Programme which aims at covering the whole country by 1963, can work effectively without taking into consideration the resources of the tribal areas or meeting their particular needs.

When the Community Programme was launched in October 1952, over 335 of the 3,000 villages in Bastar, covering an area of 682 sq. miles and with a population of one lakh Muria and Maria Gonds, were taken up for intensive development. Since then, many more villages have been added. The pattern of development, in which agriculture, health, education and communications figure prominently, was the same as in the rest of India, the only difference, if it can be called a difference, being in its application, a difference of emphasis. The programme had to be adjusted to suit the most urgent needs of the people.

The approach, needless to say, was entirely objective. There was no feeling that something unique was being done for these 'anthropological groups', nor that they required any particular attention. It was essentially an economic and cultural programme, in the context of the present-day needs, with emphasis on such aspects of development as would save it from stagnation and failure.

Paradoxically enough, it is both difficult and easy to carry out such a programme among these simple hill-people. If one approaches them with genuine love and affection and tackles their problems without hurting their self-respect and their pride, one is sure to achieve results.

In the course of a statistical survey of the work done in the Bastar Block, the officials connected with the programme remarked: "Well, we don't know what your yardstick of

success is, but if you ask us what we have been trying to do all these months, our reply will be that we have done work in the minds and hearts of the people."

The most characteristic feature of the people of Bastar, indeed of all tribal people, is that, once you win their hearts, they are ready to do anything. To quote Mr. W. V. Grigson, who spent years amongst them, "All Marias are extremely grateful for any benefit received and for sympathy and interest".* They respond most spontaneously.

Again, speaking about their virtues, the same author says, "In their own hills they are a bold and hardy race, industrious as cultivators, and truthful to a proverb....are quickly won over by kindness".

The Community Development Programme, which is based on partnership and co-operation between the Government and the people, soon manifested this aspect of their character.

The people of this tribal area practise shifting cultivation. They make a clearing in the forest by setting fire to it and using the burnt out ashes as fertiliser. After 'scratching' the soil with sharpened sticks or with the most primitive ploughs, they invoke the aid of their ancestors before sowing by chanting the following:

Todar Pepi mit Kenjat! Maku har kihanom, inje Kenjatu, aru maki nehna nehna anam wayi! Inje ram aimatu, manc-masi mantu! (Hearken, oh ancestors! We adjure you, hearken now, and let us have an excellent harvest! Let not your wrath now fall upon us, and be not deaf to my prayer).

Agriculture with the tribal people has always been a gamble with the rains since there are no irrigation facilities in this area. The use of green manure or compost was, until recently, unheard of among them. Reckless depredation of the forests made the land increasingly unproductive on account of soil erosion.

The tribal people are, however, always ready for a co-operative endeavour and they hold that crops are the result of the labour of the village, rather than of the efforts of the individual. They stand together or fall together in their co-operative venture. This trait of theirs has proved of great

*The Maria Gonds of Bastar, by W.V. Grigson.

help to the project staff who have drawn up a programme of agriculture for them. The programme, at the initial stage, was calculated to make the people agriculture-minded rather than introduce improved methods of agriculture among them.

A thousand acres of State-owned land has so far been distributed to the co-operatives formed by the villagers. In the Kondagaon Block headquarters, Baldeo Sonye of Ichhapur village asked for 20 acres of land, which he wanted to cultivate on co-operative lines. Replying to a question, he said that he would introduce improved methods of agriculture on this land with the help of the project staff. He had heard about the Burma Triple Cross paddy and he wanted to raise it on his own land. Another villager, Lakhman, of Dube Umargaon, has been cultivating paddy according to the Japanese method. Manure for these crops comes from the compost pits which are being dug in large numbers in the project area.

Groups of tribal farmers are taken to the nearest C.D. blocks in the plains to enable them to have an idea of the programme of Community Development. The tribal people learn a great deal from these visits. They, too, are now building separate sheds for their cattle and introducing other improvements.

Many compost and urine pits are being dug and agricultural demonstration plots prepared. Up to March 1958, 3,707 maunds of improved seeds were distributed, 2,500 acres of land reclaimed and 45,000 cattle vaccinated against rinderpest.

The development of irrigation facilities is one of the most important needs of this area. Rainfall is confined only to two months in the year. The terrain being hilly, rain water gets drained off. The problem is not only to conserve this water, but also to irrigate effectively the upper regions. Bastar is surplus in rice and comes only next to Uttar Pradesh in the production and export of oilseeds, mainly mustard. Rabi crops, like wheat and cotton, are being introduced, but all this depends on the provision of irrigation facilities.

As in Bastar, so in the adjoining Kalahandi, a special flood-resistant variety of paddy—FR 43/B—has been introduced

which is now in great demand. The Japanese method of paddy cultivation is no longer a new thing in this area. Good seeds and improved agricultural implements have been distributed. Compost pits have been dug in the villages and chemical fertilisers are also in great demand.

All these measures have resulted in an increase of 100 per cent in the total output of the area.

Dhan Kotis or grain banks have been established in this economically backward area. These banks are run by the villagers themselves without interference from any Sahukar. The Dhan Koti of Bastar village—there are many more in Kesarpal, Bhanpuri, Dahikenga, Karpawandi and other places—has usually 30,000 maunds of rice stored with it. The farmers deposit their grain with the bank during the harvest season and take loans from it when the prices in the market are highest.

Loans are given to anyone, provided a few villagers vouch for the integrity of the borrower. These people, as the Block officers explained, are 'credit-worthy' and need not furnish any security. This system is working very satisfactorily, especially as most villages have formed Vikas Mandals, which, besides manning and running the Dhan Kotis, stand security for small farmers.

There are only a few skilled hands among the tribal people and it is difficult to transport equipment in this area, the nearest railway station being 184 miles away from headquarters. With the co-operation of the people, however, roads are being levelled and bunds constructed to store water.

The development of communications forms an integral part of the agricultural programme. Without proper roads, the project staff cannot take seeds or fertilisers quickly enough to the doors of the farmers. Over 278 miles of roads have so far been laid. The people's contribution, in cash, to the various projects undertaken in the area so far comes to about Rs. 8 lakhs as against Rs. 11 lakhs spent by the Government.

Cottage industries are also being encouraged. The introduction of fly-shuttle has increased the output of home-spun

cloth among the Bastar Marias. Carpenters are now using new tools and have become more skilled in their trades. Blacksmithy has also made rapid strides with the introduction of blowers and funnels.

Bamboos are plentiful in Bastar. In fact the name of Bastar is derived, according to some, from "bas" or bamboo. The tribal people are experts in making baskets and the project staff are helping the people in marketing them. Rope-making is also being run on improved lines.

The educational programme in the area is directed mainly to teaching the young and making them agriculture-minded. This is basic education with emphasis on agriculture. It is felt that it is better to concentrate on the young than on the older ones who have to unlearn much before learning afresh.

The tribal people have an aversion for modern education. The elders, sometimes, feel that it degrades them. When the project staff initiated its ambitious educational programme among the tribal people, they looked askance at it. But the project staff set about patiently evolving a system which would suit the temperament of the tribal people and meet their needs. It has been made compulsory for the pupils to learn practical agriculture and allied subjects. The syllabus varies from month to month with the agricultural season. Twice a week the pupils do manual work.

The tribal people are now satisfied with the progress made by their boys and feel that they know much more about agriculture than the elders. At first they were amused when the youngsters talked about transplantation, manure and the like, but when the boys of the Bastar High School received the first prize for the maximum yield from an acre of land, they were full of praise for the boys. Now the tribal people are eager to send their sons to school. As a result, 85 primary schools of a new type, known as 'non-land schools', have been opened in the project area. The authorities have made arrangements with the farmers which entitles the boys to work on their lands for a 50 per cent share of the produce. The boys are thus helping the schools to run independently of Government support. What is more, the much-needed

leadership in the sphere of agriculture is also being supplied by the schools.

"That is why", the Block officials explain, "we are keen on 'catching them young'. Once a solid foundation is laid, the programme will continue irrespective of the project staff". Only a couple of years ago there was hardly any attendance in these schools; now they are humming with activity.

Measures have also been taken to improve the health of the tribal people.

Avitaminosis is a common disease in Bastar. The tribal people suffer from malnutrition. Pej or Maarbhat is their main diet. The use of vegetables is not known to them. To make the diet balanced. vegetables like radish, spinach and lady's finger are now being grown in almost all the villages. An entry in the doctor's diary reads : kitchen garden should be encouraged in the villages of Bastar.

Skin diseases and malaria are widely prevalent in this area. The people have hitherto relied more on magic and superstitious practices for the cure of these diseases. Patience was, therefore, required to induce them to take to modern medicine. Two health centres and a leprosy clinic have been opened in the project area. The Janapada Sabha hospitals are also receiving aid from the project funds.

The Orissa tribal people are good craftsmen and are expert in weaving and shoe-making. Mehers are hereditary weavers. From the Palli Vikas Yojna, as they call the development programme, they receive loans. Many co-operative societies for marketing and other purposes have been formed. Their children now receive training at the polytechnic centre at Junagadh in shoe-making, tailoring and carpentry. Also, instructors from this centre are sent to the villages to open temporary camps. Improved methods of training are being employed and new patterns and designs have been introduced.

The villagers in this project area have constructed many miles of roads, not only making many of the villages in the interior accessible throughout the year but also providing employment to landless peasants.

The people of the area were much given to drinking, but a tactful approach has now changed their habit to some extent.

The tribal peoples' enthusiasm for the development programme and their desire to contribute their mite is quite evident in the other tribal areas of India as well.

Aware of this keenness among the Adivasis and backed by some experience while working among them, the Ministry of Community Development and Co-operation, with the help of the Ministry of Home Affairs, launched a new scheme—the Multi-purpose Tribal Blocks—in 1956. Forty-three Blocks in tribal areas, each having an average population of 25,000, were allotted to different States with a provision of Rs. 27 lakhs (Rs. 12 lakhs from the Ministry of Community Development and Co-operation and Rs. 15 lakhs from the Ministry of Home Affairs), each for a period of five years. The selection of blocks was done in consultation with the State Governments.

The guiding principle in the working of these blocks would be, as enunciated by the Prime Minister in another context, the following five principles. (1) People should develop along the lines of their own genius and nothing should be imposed on them. The traditional arts and culture of the Adivasis are to be encouraged. (2) Tribal rights in land and forest should be respected. (3) A team of workers, from amongst them, should be built up. (4) The work should rather be carried through the Adivasis' existing social and cultural institutions. (5) Results will be judged not by statistics but by the quality of the human character that is evolved.

To work out the details, two special seminars—one at Pachmarhi and the other at Ranchi—were held in 1958. The seminars recommended, *inter alia,* that a minimum programme be evolved according to the local needs and practices, and that the tribal representatives of the Block Development Committees be given a major say in determining the local programmes.

According to the conclusions of the seminars, priorities in the programme should be given to (*a*) increase in production of food and wealth; (*b*) provision of adequate drinking water; and (*c*) provision for suitable shelter for every tribe.

Panchayat has been decided to be the basic unit for developmental activities in rural India. But in the case of tribal areas it has been recommended that statutory panchayats may be introduced only where tribal councils are not working effectively.

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